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Evaluation of the International Trade Centre

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

This evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) sought to assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the International Trade Centre (ITC) in relation to its objectives.

During the period under evaluation (2006-2014), ITC successfully delivered project activities and outputs in the areas of specialized trade research, capacity-building, policy support and export competitiveness support. ITC also launched an ongoing change process in 2008 to improve its results orientation. Nevertheless, OIOS found only limited evidence of the results these activities and outputs have achieved for targeted beneficiaries and clients. Despite improvements in ITC to project designs over the period evaluated, significant gaps remain in monitoring and evaluation, project planning and especially in collecting high-quality data on project outcomes and impacts. These data gaps extend to measures of efficiency: ITC lacks data linking costs to outputs, thus undermining its ability to know how cost-effective its interventions are. There are signs that a new integrated projects portal might enable attribution of total costs to outputs, but this effort is still under way and its results therefore unclear.

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The mandated role of ITC includes supporting developing countries, post-conflict States and transitional economies. The Centre's products and services have reached beneficiaries within these categories and are regarded by beneficiaries and donors as relevant. However, ITC has not prioritized its work on the basis of a holistic, strategic and data-driven appraisal of needs — or of its comparative advantage in meeting these needs. As a result, while it is possible that its interventions are targeting those countries and industries most in need of its expertise and where it can make the most difference, ITC does not know that this is the case. This donor- and beneficiary-demand-driven approach might in part be owed to the Centre's increasing reliance on extrabudgetary resources, which are frequently earmarked.

While ITC has made progress in establishing the architecture for mainstreaming cross-cutting issues, it has not consistently addressed these issues in its project designs.

OIOS makes five recommendations, all deemed important according to its criticality rating system. These are that ITC:

(a) Regularly monitor operational units' implementation of the action plans formulated in response to the 2014 evaluation of the Centre as well as the present evaluation, and regularly report on such implementation to its Joint Advisory Group;

(b) Incrementally adopt a more holistic, data-driven approach to strategic planning and budgeting;

(c) Revise its programme and project approval protocol to ensure project alignment with corporate priorities and objective needs assessments, as well as adequate attention to monitoring and evaluation and risk management;

(d) Improve its capacity to generate credible evidence on the results its interventions have achieved, and on these interventions' cost-effectiveness;

(e) Accelerate mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues.

I. Introduction

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) selected the International Trade Centre (ITC) for evaluation on the basis of a risk assessment undertaken to identify Secretariat programme evaluation priorities. The Committee for Programme and Coordination selected this evaluation for consideration at its fifty-fifth session in 2015 (see A/68/16, para. 158). The General Assembly endorsed the selection in paragraph 5 of its resolution 68/20.

2. The general frame of reference for OIOS evaluation is provided in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, which defines the purpose of evaluation as: (a) determining, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives; and (b) enabling the Secretariat and member States to engage in systematic reflection on increasing Organizational effectiveness (see ST/SGB/2000/8, Regulation 7.1).[1] The present report has been prepared in conformity with the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group. The comments of ITC management were sought on the draft report, and were taken into account in the preparation of the final report. The final comments of ITC are provided in the annex to the report.

II. Background

A. Mandate, organization, governance and resources

3. As a subsidiary organ of the United Nations acting through the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), ITC has an organizational status distinct from that of most other Secretariat entities. Created in 1964 by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), ITC has since 1968 operated under the joint aegis of GATT/WTO and UNCTAD. Within programme 10, Trade and development, the same biennial work plan defining the UNCTAD programme of work, ITC bears responsibility for the implementation of subprogramme 6, Operational aspects of trade promotion and export development. The aim of subprogramme 6 is to foster sustainable economic development and contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals in developing and transition economies through trade and international business development.

4. ITC serves as the focal point in the United Nations system for technical cooperation with developing countries and economies in transition in promoting trade and export development. The Centre's trade-related technical assistance focuses on assisting businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, in developing countries and economies in transition. It also assists enterprises in developed countries that are interested in aligning their business practices with the ITC mandate.

5. In order to summarize the Centre's underlying programme logic, OIOS developed a programme impact pathway for this evaluation. Rooted in the Centre's

[1] See ST/SGB/2000/8, Regulation 7.1.

strategic frameworks and consultations with ITC, the programme impact pathway serves as a visual road map conveying how the programme aims to fulfil its mandate and targeted objectives.

6. ITC endeavours to achieve its objectives through the following activities:

(a) Supporting small and medium-sized enterprises export competitiveness, with special emphasis on gender, poor communities and the environment;

(b) Making specialized trade knowledge available by producing and disseminating relevant and targeted trade information (trade intelligence) that can help countries, policymakers, trade support institutions and businesses better understand and navigate the trade and export world;

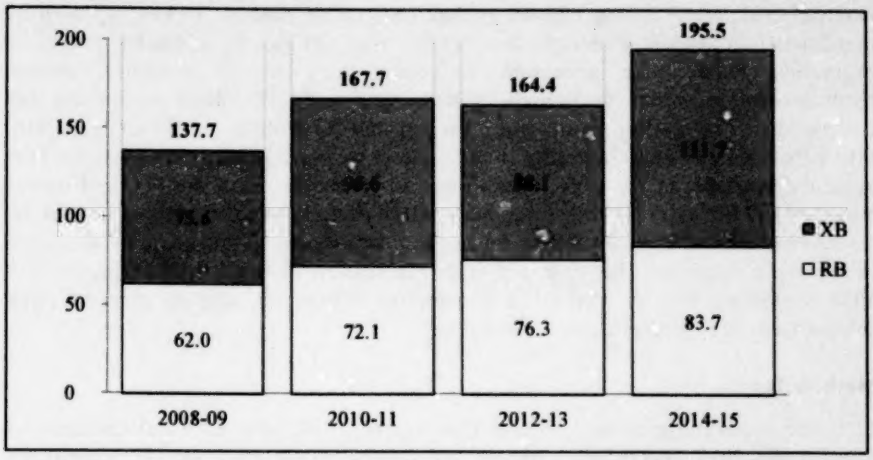
(c) Offering capacity-building and targeted support and advice to existing trade support institutions so that they can more effectively support the private sector and policymakers on trade-related issues;

(d) Supporting policymakers, and by extension countries, in drafting, developing and implementing trade and export policies that take into account the private sector's sustainable development requirements.

7. ITC is headed by an Executive Director at the level of Assistant Secretary-General, appointed by the Secretary-General on the basis of the joint recommendation of the Director-General of WTO and the Secretary-General of UNCTAD. She is assisted by the Deputy Executive Director and the Office of the Executive Director (comprised of the Communications and Events Section and the Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance Section). ITC is further organized into four divisions: the Division of Country Programmes, the Division of Market Development, the Division of Business and Institutional Support and the Division of Programme Support.

8. Financial support for the Centre's operations includes regular budget resources, underwritten equally by WTO and UNCTAD, resources. As figure 1 indicates, the Centre's budget has been supported fairly evenly by regular budget and extrabudgetary resources in every biennium since 2008-2009. While regular budget resources increased marginally, extrabudgetary resources have risen from 2008 to 2014. The regular budget is subject to the programme and budget review procedures of the United Nations, with final programme and budget approval by the governing bodies of UNCTAD and WTO. ITC had 281 posts in 2012-2013, including 164 regular budget, 20 extrabudgetary, 92 funded by the Global Trust Fund and five comprising Associate Experts.

Figure 1
Financial resources of the International Trade Centre, 2008-2015
(Millions of United States dollars)



Notes: Figures cited are total expenditures, based on the audited financial statements before eliminations. For the 2014-2015 biennium, regular budget figures are based on the approved budget of 74.3 million Swiss francs, converted into United States dollars using the 31 December 2013 exchange rate of 0.887. Extrabudgetary figures include the technical cooperation activities fund, programme support costs fund, revolving funds and other funds. Projected 2014-2015 extrabudgetary expenditures are based on the approved 2014 operational plan budget of $51.7 million and target expenditures of $60.0 million for 2015, a target set during the Centre's 2015-2017 strategic planning process.

9. The main intergovernmental policy forum of ITC is the Joint Advisory Group, whose membership comprises representatives of UNCTAD and WTO. ITC reports to the Joint Advisory Group for substantive programme review and policy guidance. The Joint Advisory Group requires financial information focusing on the results and use of extrabudgetary contributions. Its formal role is advisory, as it does not have the power to commit financing to ITC; that power resides with the UNCTAD and WTO governing bodies. ITC also reports to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly on the use of its regular budget resources. Its financial statements covering both regular budget and extrabudgetary resources are signed by the Controller of the United Nations and audited by the Board of Auditors.

B. Evaluation framework: scope, objectives and purpose, and methodology

Scope and purpose

10. This evaluation sought to determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of ITC from 2006 to 2014, with a view to fostering discussion among member States, ITC management and the Joint Advisory Group on whether ITC has achieved results over this period and why.

11. Pursuant to these ends, OIOS relied on the best evidence available for answering its evaluation questions. The presence of an existing large-scale, external,

full-programme evaluation of ITC, finalized in June 2014 and followed in January 2015 by a management response and action plan endorsed by donors and the Joint Advisory Group, played a vital role in this regard. OIOS became aware of the 2014 external evaluation[2] during its own evaluation scoping process. In keeping with its mandated independent oversight role, OIOS was obliged to scrutinize the 2014 evaluation rather than accepting it prima facie as an evidence source. Notwithstanding minor exceptions, OIOS determined the 2014 evaluation (as compared to an earlier evaluation, carried out in 2006), to be of generally satisfactory quality and credibility in the areas it covered, having harnessed the best evidence available at the time. In addition, in interviews with the ITC evaluation manager and the external consulting team, OIOS determined the 2014 evaluation to have been sufficiently independent for use as a key source of documentary evidence in its own evaluation. That said, the main reservation of OIOS with respect to the 2014 evaluation was its conflation of effective delivery of outputs with effective achievement of results through these outputs.

Methodology

12. The overarching methodological approach of OIOS focused on: (a) determining whether the 2014 evaluation achieved full programmatic coverage, in accordance with the programme impact pathway developed for the present evaluation (see para. 5 above), and identifying any coverage gaps; (b) validating the analysis of the 2014 evaluation in those areas it did adequately cover, and undertaking further primary data collection and analysis on those areas that it did not; and (c) verifying the progress of ITC in implementing recommendations from the 2014 evaluation. To these ends, OIOS gathered evidence using a range of methods, including the following:

(a) Independent validation of the 2014 evaluation, including a stratified random sample of 65 "member checks" (i.e. re-engagement of stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation to verify the accuracy of the evaluation's analysis), re-analysis of a random sample of 56 project summaries and of a sample of 149 project documents (108 from 2014 and 41 from 2006-2013);

(b) Desk review of over 50 further documents, including strategic planning documents, policy and guidance documents, terms of reference, databases, survey results, 28 evaluations produced from 2006 to 2014, emails and memos, and a systematic compilation of documentary evidence to verify claims of action on recommendations of the 2014 evaluation;

(c) Global media scan and bibliometric analyses to assess news, trade publications and media coverage of ITC in the global media (18 and 16 hits in LexisNexis and ProQuest, respectively, based on broad Boolean search terms);

(d) Semi-structured individual interviews (including six group interviews) with ITC staff (21), partners (8), beneficiaries (10) and Member States (12), and 12 focus groups (comprising 60 individuals) among these same stakeholder groups;

[2] The report of the evaluation is available from www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/About_ITC/How_ITC_Works/Evaluation/1.%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf.

(e) Self-administered web-based surveys of 21 "thought leaders".[3]

13. The present evaluation's key limitations centred on data gaps. These included low response rates among beneficiaries and some Member States among "member check" interviewees, requiring extensive follow-up to achieve an acceptable participation rate; contradictory information across multiple self-reported data sources within ITC, requiring reconciliation; and unavailable data, such as original interview notes from the 2014 evaluation of ITC and specific ITC documents, lowering the strength of evidence in some desk review analyses. Finally, having identified key coverage gaps in the 2014 evaluation (see para. 12 above) — namely in the areas of outcome-level effectiveness and in rigorous measurement of efficiency — OIOS was unable to obtain valid or reliable data to adequately redress these gaps. As a result, its own analysis of these areas relies on proxy measures of effectiveness and efficiency.

III. Evaluation results

A. The International Trade Centre has made notable gains in strengthening its results orientation in recent years, but evidence for the effects of its project interventions on targeted beneficiaries remains weak

Gradual strengthening of results orientation

14. Improvements in the Centre's results orientation began in 2008 with the introduction of its first strategic plan (2009-2012), an operational plan for 2008 and a new evaluation policy. In 2009, ITC clarified its corporate objectives, developed performance indicators and began reporting in terms of the delivery of outputs rather than the allocation of inputs.

15. This change process has gained momentum from 2011 to the present. Since 2011, ITC has prioritized the embedding of results-based management in the organization, focusing on enhanced corporate-level coherence and performance monitoring. Since 2012, monitoring and reporting have been facilitated by a results-based management data entry tool. The results-based management portal has been linked to the projects portal, which constitutes the main online results-based management reporting architecture. By 2013, section plans had been developed to make the connection between project- and corporate-level objectives. ITC also developed an online development results dashboard in 2013 to enhance reporting to key external stakeholders. In a departure from previous biennial planning documents, the 2016-2017 strategic framework and 2015-2017 strategic plan are now aligned, and both have a clear breakdown of corporate-level outcomes with corresponding indicators of achievement. In response to a recommendation from the

[3] A "thought leader" is an individual recognized as a leading authority in a given topical area. The thought leaders surveyed in this evaluation comprised six female and 15 male experts from universities, think tanks and international organizations in 10 geographic regions. Thought leaders were identified through a "snowball" sample (also known as "chain" or "referral" sampling), beginning with an initial list of 102 individuals OIOS drew from top international economic policy think tanks identified in the 2013 *Global Go to Think Tank Index Report* and experts from the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development network. The survey was administered only to those individuals who agreed in advance to participate.

2014 evaluation, ITC now uses results terminology aligned with the definitions of the United Nations Development Group. ITC has complemented these initiatives with staff training in results-based management.

16. This redoubled focus on results extends to the project level. In 2009, ITC reviewed its project design process, leading to a realignment of the quality assurance mechanism to overarching corporate objectives. The Centre also undertook an exercise in 2011 to align project-level outputs, outcomes and their associated indicators with the corporate logical framework of the 2014-2015 strategic framework. In response to a 2013 OIOS audit recommendation (see audit report 2013/067, available from www.un.org/Depts/oios/pages/iad_reports.aspx) and a 2010-2011 Board of Auditors report (A/67/5 (Vol. III)), ITC also streamlined its project and programme design templates, developed more robust quality-control procedures, updated the criteria underlying Project Approval Committee review ratings and introduced Project Approval Committee development markers. Moreover, the project plan templates now require a monitoring plan where outputs, outcomes and their associated indicators are tracked.

17. OIOS verified that these improvements have led to corresponding improvements in ITC project design over time. In its random sample of 44 project plans and ideas reviewed by the Project Approval Committee in 2014, OIOS verified that 40 of them contained a sufficient level of detail to monitor project progress, 30 consistently paid attention to establishing plausible results chains (output-outcomes-impacts) and 30 embedded long-term-result thinking from the outset. This represents a degree of improvement over project designs in previous periods.[4] In its re-analysis of 56 projects reviewed in the 2014 evaluation of the Centre, OIOS further determined project design to have improved slightly over time.[5]

Insufficient attention to demonstrating results

18. The 2014 evaluation of ITC, as well as a 2014 OIOS advisory engagement,[6] acknowledge these notable gains, especially from 2011 to 2014. The 2014 evaluation further concluded that ITC had successfully carried out the activities described in paragraph 6 above. In its validation exercise, OIOS independently verified that in most cases, there was sufficient documentation to show that ITC had delivered most of its planned project outputs, and had generally done so on budget (61.4 per cent) and on time (92.5 per cent).

[4] OIOS noted in its qualitative comparative analysis of 44 project plans reviewed by the Project Approval Committee in 2014 that documents submitted after ITC updated the project design policies received fewer lower ratings (18 per cent scored either a 3 or 4) than documents submitted before the policy changes (e.g. close to half, or 45 per cent, of documents scored a 3 or 4). Also, in comparing the post-July 2014 project plans reviewed by the Project Approval Committee with a small random sample (n = 10) of project plans from before the creation of the Committee, the latter documents were found less likely to explicitly indicate results chains, logframes or cross-cutting issues than the more recent project plans reviewed by the Committee.

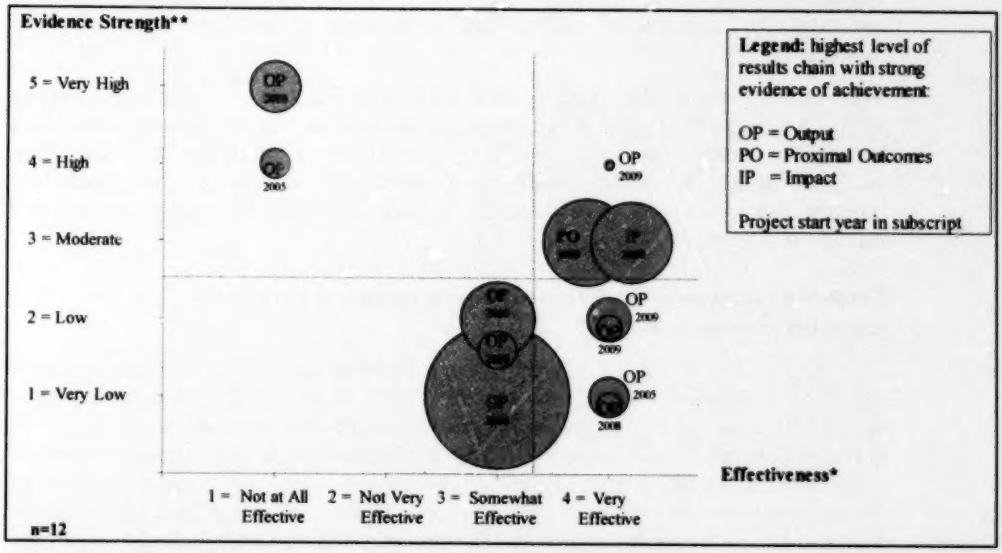
[5] Gauged by calculating correlations between a chronological measure (i.e. project start year) and 20 measures of project design strength. Correlation coefficients varied considerably (i.e. between -.090 and 0.81), but averaged in the low positive range mean = .32, median = .37).

[6] See OIOS, "Advisory engagement to assess the progress of the International Trade Centre in implementing its accountability processes", report No. 2014/055, available from www.un.org/Depts/oios/pages/iad_reports.aspx.

19. Despite the Centre's progress in promoting a stronger results orientation, OIOS concluded that the organization had gathered little evidence to document results achieved beyond the level of output delivery. Apart from a few examples, OIOS was unable to identify projects with strong evidence on whether or not the Centre's projects succeeded in achieving the intended outcomes summarized in paragraphs 3 to 5 above.

20. Figure 2 speaks to this lack of evidence for results. Drawing on a sample of 56 interventions from the 2014 evaluation which OIOS re-analysed, it plots these interventions' levels of effectiveness to the extent that OIOS could infer this information from available data, and the assessment of OIOS of the strength of the evidence underlying the claim of effectiveness. Each intervention is labelled with an indication of whether the evidence was at the output, outcome or impact level, and the project start year. The size of each intervention is also scaled in proportion to its overall budget, an issue addressed in section II.C below.

Figure 2
Summary of OIOS assessment of intervention effectiveness of ITC, including strength of evidence



* Inferred level of effectiveness on highest point in results chain targeted, based on the available evidence.
** Strength of evidence for achievement of end point in results chain.
Note: horizontal and vertical intersects indicated at mean for each axis. Evidence strength has median of 2.0 and mean of 2.5. Effectiveness has median of 4.0 and mean of 3.3. Circle size proportional to project budget.
Source: OIOS.

21. As figure 2 establishes, only 12 of these 56 cases contained sufficient information from which to draw conclusions at all, underlining the assessment of OIOS regarding the insufficiency of the Centre's evidence base. Moreover, of those 12 cases, effectiveness varied considerably, and the evidence was generally low. The effectiveness of almost every programme or project analysed could only be determined at the output level. In only two cases could OIOS determine effectiveness at the proximal (i.e. immediate) outcome or impact level, and only with moderate strength of evidence.

22. Despite this shortcoming, preliminary indications suggest that the strength of evidence for results might be gradually improving.[7] Beyond this trend, OIOS was unable to identify any patterns in the types of interventions that received monitoring and evaluation attention and those that did not: the Centre's lack of investment in monitoring and evaluation applies to programmes and projects of all types and sizes.

23. OIOS was able to identify a limited number of noteworthy exceptions where ITC invested in delivering credible evidence for results achieved. These include the Netherlands Trust Fund Phase II Programme in Bangladesh and the Poor Communities and Trade Programme in Kenya. Additionally, in its independent validation of the 2014 evaluation of ITC, OIOS verified that some projects point to medium-term results in respect of the Centre's targeted outcome of strengthening trade support institutions' capacity (see para. 6(c) above). For example, the Netherlands Trust Fund Phase II Programme led to improved competence of trade support institutions, resulting in some small and medium-sized enterprises increasing exports in 2012. In contrast, absence of regular reporting by trade support institutions in the 2011 project on the expansion of intra- and interregional trade among the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa, the West African Economic and Monetary Union and Francophone countries in the Mekong region made it difficult to collect data to ascertain if new trade relations were established.

24. Owing to the lack of valid and reliable monitoring data provided by ITC, along with a decentralized and fragmented documentation of its actual client and beneficiary contacts up to mid-2013 (see para. 13 above), both the 2014 evaluation and the efforts of OIOS itself were admittedly anecdotal, piecemeal and retrospective. They do not constitute an adequate substitute for systematic, rigorous results measurement.

Further improvements to results orientation planned, with risks requiring management

25. In response to a Joint Advisory Group recommendation, as well as the 2006[8] and 2014 evaluations of ITC, the Centre's 2015-2017 strategic plan commits the organization to continue becoming more results-driven through a range of initiatives. At the highest level, these include the production of an annual corporate-level impact analysis report, ensuring that all new large programmes target the impact level and that project indicators are aligned to the 2016-2017 strategic framework. These initiatives also include the adoption of a programmatic approach and, from 2014 onward, classifying all projects and services according to six overarching focus areas. It is anticipated that this classification will provide the foundation for assessing overall organizational performance along key product lines. ITC has also committed itself to gradually developing new methods, standards and an overall architecture for project evaluability and impact assessment, and to revising its evaluation policy. The Centre's Evaluation and Monitoring Unit plans to re-administer the impact survey in 2015, conduct strategic evaluations on impact

[7] In the OIOS re-analysis of projects evaluated, correlation between strength of evidence and intervention start years was moderately positive (.46), suggesting modest improvement in the evidence base between 2008 and 2010 (2010 being the date of the most recent of these 12 project cases).

[8] Evaluation of the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO, February 2006 (see www.itcevaluation.org/).

assessment practices and engage with experts in measuring impact in terms of aid for trade.

26. OIOS also documented a series of measures to support higher-level corporate realignment to facilitate better results and accountability. ITC has committed itself to undertaking quality assurance at all phases of the project cycle. It is also in the process of developing a new integrated project portal, to be rolled out in three phases from 2014 to 2016, that will link disparate aspects of the project cycle management process to allow ITC staff to track, plan and report in a single workflow, thus eliminating duplicative data entry. It will also enable ITC to move towards a programme-focused intervention model and facilitate the transition to Umoja and the costing of the Centre's technical assistance. In addition, ITC is developing a costing methodology to link total costs to outputs (see para. 45 below).

27. While commending these initiatives, OIOS noted three key risks to be managed if the change process is to succeed in strengthening the Centre's ability to demonstrate its results and meet the expectations of its key stakeholders. (As ITC embarks on its 2015-2017 strategic plan and 2016-2017 strategic framework, it has engaged OIOS to build up a risk management framework beginning in January 2015.)

28. One risk centres on the preliminary impact assessments of ITC. The Centre's first attempt at measuring long-term results began in 2013 with a pilot impact assessment study. In that study, ITC sought to understand, through survey feedback, beneficiaries' perceptions of the impact of its interventions on exports, jobs creation and environmental sustainability, as well as how it could improve its services. ITC relied on a small sample of beneficiaries without a clear understanding of the sampling universe (that is, a well-defined population of all of its beneficiaries from which to draw a sample), and only on data self-reported by the entities the Centre assisted. The maintenance and refinement of the client relationship management database is vital to this endeavour, since client information is stored in the database and the accuracy of the information directly affects the reliability of results in impact assessments. However, since its full roll-out in mid-2013, the database has contained a number of contacts that are outdated and duplicative, owing to the importation of older ITC corporate contact databases into the system.[9] As with the integrated project portal, ongoing entry of up-to-date and accurate data, coupled with compliance monitoring, will be vital to the success of the database.[10] More fundamentally, self-reported perceptual data alone are insufficient for credibly demonstrating evidence for results; for that, ITC will also need non-perceptual (i.e. "hard") evidence, which it acknowledges is required in a 2014 concept paper. As the aforementioned impact assessment methods are still being refined, OIOS was unable to verify that ITC intends to undertake a more appropriately rigorous approach to impact measurement.

[9] ITC, Trade Information Services Section, "ITC's client relationship management system progress report: realising the potential of the system (how to make the CRM better for ITC)", October 2014.

[10] The client relationship management database is the first centralized database with the potential to store and share information on the Centre's clients. It currently contains information on 33,000 ostensible "clients". However, ITC staff members, who must populate the database with their client lists in order to receive travel reimbursements, complain that the database is time-consuming, not user-friendly and underused as an information source.

29. Another set of risks centres on the strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation functions. While its strategic planning documents have become more results-oriented, ITC lacks an explicit corporate-level logic model akin to the programme impact pathway developed for the present evaluation. This type of "results road map" includes a breakdown of the intended pathways to results, various product lines' intended contributions to such results and assumptions and anticipated risks affecting the achievement of results. It would also form the basis for articulating accountabilities for results throughout the organization.

30. Regarding monitoring and evaluation, current structural arrangements do not afford this function sufficient operational independence for generating the credible results information ITC will require. The 2006 evaluation of ITC recommended strengthening the evaluation function, and the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit was created in 2008. However, OIOS verified that, after initially enjoying a fair degree of independence by reporting to the Executive Director of the Centre, in June 2013 the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit was moved and its reporting line on programmatic issues nested within the Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance Section. In its 2013 independent assessment of Secretariat evaluation functions, OIOS scored the Centre's evaluation policy as only moderately adhering to the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group, and deemed a sample of its evaluations to be of "medium" quality. A 2015 analysis by the Joint Inspection Unit corroborates the conclusions reached by OIOS in this regard.[11]

B. The products and services of the International Trade Centre are tailored to the priorities of donors, assisted Governments and some beneficiaries, rather than being prioritized in a strategic, risk-based manner

Approaches to country and project selection are largely donor- and beneficiary-driven

31. In accordance with its mandate, ITC works with clients and beneficiaries in developing countries, post-conflict States and transitional economies and gives priority to sub-Saharan Africa, least developed countries, land-locked developing countries and small island developing States. Within these broad parameters, the Centre's approach to selecting countries in which to operate and projects to undertake varies considerably. In some cases, the Centre has successfully persuaded donors to fund projects or contribute non-earmarked funds in those countries where its products and services are most needed and can have the greatest impact.

32. However, the Centre's work programme is predominately driven by donor priorities and beneficiary demand. While it broadly states the country categories indicated in paragraph 4 above as its priority countries, ITC does not indicate precisely which countries within these categories it will prioritize on the basis of a specific needs assessment. Moreover, in its re-analysis of 56 projects, although OIOS estimated there to be substantial beneficiary input in initiating a project idea (57.4 per cent) and donor input (46.8 per cent), ITC country programme staff (23.4 per cent) and product staff (12.8 per cent) played a comparatively lesser role

[11] Joint Inspection Unit, "Analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/2014/6), Geneva, 2014.

in project initiation. In only 4.3 per cent of projects did ITC staff spearhead project initiation and draw donors and clients to its idea.

33. The assessment of OIOS in this regard is consistent with the 2006 and 2014 evaluations of ITC. While determining that the organization uses a diverse range of formal and informal project needs assessments,[12] these evaluation teams were unable to locate evidence of systematic needs assessments in the selection of countries or projects.[13] However, 24 of the 42 projects in the OIOS re-analysis indicated that the process of aligning the intervention with national strategies of beneficiaries was very systematic.[14] Moreover, this same analysis showed that some form of project needs assessment was conducted in 79.0 per cent of the projects sampled, but that the quality of these assessments varied greatly.

34. OIOS corroborated that the lack of a more strategic approach might be attributed, at least in part, to the heavy reliance on (especially earmarked) extrabudgetary resources, which have risen at a greater rate than regular budget resources from 2006 to 2014. ITC expects 2014 extrabudgetary funds to amount to $51.7 million, 13.0 per cent higher than the initial 2013 budget. However, over the period covered by the current evaluation, significant variations in funding in net extrabudgetary resources have occurred, especially since 2008. Another factor is the Centre's own lack of strategy to date for reversing this trend. ITC claims to be in the process of developing a country needs assessment to remedy this gap, but despite multiple requests OIOS has not been provided with documentation to verify this claim.[15]

35. While most ITC personnel interviewed in the OIOS validation exercise concurred with these assessments, a small number contested them. Some asserted that all projects were tailor-made to countries' needs, and that donor-driven approaches did not necessarily conflict with a project's organizational relevance. Others challenged the notion that there can be a "perfect" needs assessment which automatically attracts funding, and that ITC needs to remain flexible rather than act through a drawn-out formal needs assessment. Yet others pointed to the organization's funding characteristics as an intractable feature of its operating environment.

36. OIOS does not question that the Centre's donor- and beneficiary-driven approach might be filling a need. Indeed, the steady demand for the Centre's services and products could be interpreted as one indicator of its continued relevance. However, this approach might not necessarily ensure that ITC is consistently supplying products and services where need is greatest, or that its interventions are targeted to the countries, sectors and small and medium-sized enterprises where it can achieve the greatest impact in reducing poverty, a key element of its United Nations mandate. This approach also runs the risk that, without strategic due diligence of supported industries and partner enterprises, ITC

[12] Also noted in ITC e-mail correspondence, 13-15 January 2015.

[13] The ITC operational plan for 2015 does indicate that in 2015 the Centre will invest $1.5 million in needs assessments.

[14] Only 42 of the 56 cases entailed valid data.

[15] Internal e-mail exchanges indicate that ITC, under the 2015-2017 strategic plan, plans to embed and mainstream country needs assessments and to fine-tune a programmatic framework for the Centre's engagement at country level.

might unintentionally be contributing to market distortions and other unintended consequences.

37. OIOS ascertained a need for ITC to take a risk-based approach, an area which a 2014 OIOS advisory and various Board of Auditors reports have acknowledged as being weak. This lack of a risk-based approach itself constitutes a risk as ITC embarks on its 2016-2017 strategic framework and 2015-2017 strategic plan (see para. 15 above). Although ITC project plans now request project managers to contemplate project-level risk management, the degree to which risks are actually identified — and addressed by contingency arrangements — is variable.

Comparative advantage is not systematically mapped, undermining potential for relevance and for resource-catalysing visibility

38. The Centre's approach to prioritization extends to the strategic mapping of its value added in relation to other actors. The 2014 evaluation of ITC concluded that a number of aid-for-trade providers operated in parallel, at times collaborating or competing, but more often operating in their own niche with little knowledge of one another in the same country. OIOS notes that in focus group discussions, ITC personnel perceived this relationship to be more in the nature of synergy and complementarity than of competition. Indeed, respondents believe that the aid-for-trade arena is too big for one organization to dominate and that there is room for many actors. However, the 2014 evaluation notes that ITC does not systematically analyse gaps in the aid-for-trade arena where it could complement other initiatives.

39. Given the Centre's largely donor- and beneficiary-driven interventions, it is unsurprising that ITC is well-known and largely well-regarded among those with whom it has worked, but less well-known beyond this "closed circuit". By these accounts, ITC is relevant to the extent that it meets its own stakeholders' demands, a sentiment that the OIOS validation of the 2014 evaluation confirmed.

40. Beyond the high recognition ITC enjoys among these key stakeholders, understanding of ITC and its comparative advantage appears to be limited. The 2014 evaluation demonstrates this through its surveys and interviews for the portfolio analysis and country case studies. The thought leader survey carried out by OIOS corroborated this assessment: overall awareness and recognition of the Centre's products and services are low, with fewer than half of respondents able to assess the Centre's relevance. Additionally, there is limited understanding of its comparative advantage relative to other actors: only five respondents who are familiar with ITC (out of a total of 21 respondents) strongly agree that ITC delivers clear value added compared to similar work by other relevant actors involved in this area. The OIOS media scan also yielded very few results, underscoring this low level of awareness.[16]

41. The Centre's non-resident agency status might limit its visibility to potential clients and beneficiaries in-country. OIOS maintains, however, that by systematically mapping, seizing on and making more visible its strengths compared to other actors, while at the same time demonstrating its results achieved, ITC could begin to shift away from its current approach driven by earmarked extrabudgetary resources and undertake more results-driven resource mobilization. This approach would be consistent with its corporate effort to move to a more results-driven

[16] There were 18 hits in LexisNexis and 16 in ProQuest.

approach (see paras. 14-17 above). The lack of such an approach, conversely, constitutes a further risk as the Centre embarks on its 2015-2017 strategic plan and 2016-2017 strategic framework. OIOS noted that ITC has begun undertaking steps to rectify this gap in tandem with its 2015-2017 strategic plan.

C. The International Trade Centre is beginning to move towards more transparent financial management and more streamlined workflows in order to better deliver results

42. Numerous reports since 2006 have pointed out the inability of ITC to demonstrate linkages between the results it has achieved and the resources it has allocated to these results.[17] In particular, the 2006 and 2014 evaluations of the Centre highlighted the absence of data linking costs with outputs, which impeded it from making informed decisions based on a clear notion of its overall efficiency.[18] Combined with a lack of rigorous results data (see paras. 18-24 above), the evaluations OIOS reviewed were uniformly unable to assess value-for-money. In its re-analysis of 56 projects, OIOS could not credibly gauge projects' cost-effectiveness with the information at hand. In several cases, budget data were missing altogether. The absence of such information arises partly from the lack of interface between the Centre's various underlying data systems. In 2011, ITC also delayed cost-related initiatives owing to other priorities (see paras. 14-17 above).[19]

43. In response to these challenges, since 2012 ITC has invested in upgrading its internal data systems in order to streamline work flows and enhance its efficiency and cost-effectiveness. These include the integrated project portal, the client relationship management database, a web content management system and the intranet (see paras. 26 and 28 above). The roll-out of the new integrated project portal incorporates the financial costing of projects and other features. Phases 2 and 3 of the integrated project portal plan, slated for 2015-2016, include the roll-out of customizable project lists to improve resource management and reporting. There are also plans to incorporate a multi-user interface into the integrated project portal so that ITC staff will be able to access the budget management component for a complete financial overview of the Centre's activities and projects. Donors will also have access to information on project costs, enhancing transparency in financial management.[20]

44. The 2014 OIOS advisory engagement (see para. 18 above), the 2014 evaluation of ITC and reports of the Board of Auditors note that regular-budget

[17] For example, the 2006 and 2014 evaluations of ITC; Board of Auditors reports A/63/5 (Vol. III), para. 77, A/65/5 (Vol. III), para. 78, A/67/5 (Vol. III), para. 61 and A/69/5 (Vol. III), para. 15; OIOS, "Advisory engagement to assess the progress of the International Trade Centre in implementing a framework for accountability" (VE2013/350/01), November 2014.

[18] Evaluation of the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO, February 2006 (see www.itcevaluation.org/), synthesis report: Independent Evaluation of the International Trade Centre, 2014 (www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/About_ITC/How_ITC_Works/Evaluation/1.%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf), para. 310.

[19] This conclusion is echoed in reports of the Board of Auditors (A/65/5 (Vol. III), para. 78 and A/67/5 (Vol. III), para. 65), the 2014 evaluation report (p. 84), the ITC project portal road map (see note 20 below) and the Centre's costing methodology. Prioritization of costing only took hold at corporate level in 2013.

[20] ITC, "Road map towards a new project portal for ITC", 8 October 2014.

contributions to project budgets are not currently disclosed, including contributions to cover staff time devoted to the project. This gap is rooted in the Secretariat's Integrated Management Information System, which is not output-based. Moreover, these sources concur with a number of previous reviews suggesting that the Secretariat's migration to a new integrated resource management and administration platform, Umoja, is unlikely to enhance this functionality. If it is to capture costs and link these to results, ITC must do so in parallel to Umoja.[21]

45. ITC has progressed incrementally on this front. A 2010-2012 pilot costing project on efficiency savings by the Centre's Division of Programme Support determined that it was difficult to link costs to particular outputs. A subsequent pilot costing study, initiated by the Market Analysis and Research Section and the Information Technology and Systems Section, developed a methodology to remedy this gap.[22] The pilot's spreadsheet and data entry tool permitted project managers to allocate costs, including staff salaries, travel costs and consultancy rates, to outputs. In 2014, the scope of the costing project broadened to focus on capturing the full cost to ITC through the new integrated project portal. This costing exercise, which is still in the design phase, proposes to add a module (or extension) to the results-based management module in the new projects portal. It is foreseen that once the project manager creates the links for a project's outputs and reports on the activities, the costing module will be available for each reported activity.

D. Integration of cross-cutting issues into project designs remains weak

46. Among the Centre's three cross-cutting issues, gender and environment have a longer history within the organization than youth. Both have been cross-cutting issues since 2010, and in the same year ITC launched efforts to mainstream them into its projects and operations. By contrast, while youth receives explicit focus in the 2010-2013 strategic plan, only in 2014 was a consolidated programme developed on this issue.

47. The Centre's adoption of the environment as a cross-cutting issue is rooted in Millennium Development Goal 7 (environmental sustainability). Its initial objectives in this area were to adapt trade practices to environmental concerns and to help developing countries overcome constraints and weak national environmental policy. Responsibility for mainstreaming environment resides in the trade and environment programme.

48. A 2012 midterm evaluation of the trade, climate change and environment programme assessed the overall effectiveness of environment mainstreaming in ITC to be limited, a conclusion echoed in a 2013 audit and in the 2014 evaluation of ITC. OIOS corroborated this assessment in its re-analysis of 56 projects and in its analysis of 44 project plans reviewed by the Project Approval Committee in 2014.[23]

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[21] ITC, "Activity based costing at ITC: Cost architecture and methodology", 31 October 2014; ITC, "Road map towards a new project portal for ITC", 8 October 2014; ITC, "ITC's new project portal: progress update", presentation to the Senior Management Committee, 16 January 2015; and OIOS, "Accountability benchmark gap assessment for ITC", annex III (2014).

[22] ITC, "Activity-based costing at ITC: cost architecture and methodology", report to the Senior Management Committee, 31 October 2014.

[23] Virtually none of the 56 projects re-analysed explicitly takes environment into consideration, and exactly half of the projects reviewed by the Project Approval Committee do so.

In response, the Centre's 2014 environment mainstreaming strategy outlines a plan on how the organization intends to address these weaknesses, namely by:

(a) Mitigating impacts of production and trade on the environment;

(b) Strengthening resilience to climate change;

(c) Realizing opportunities to expand trade in environmental products and services markets.[24]

It is unclear, however, whether the Centre's goal is to minimize its own environmental impact through its interventions, support environmental innovation among small and medium-sized enterprises, or some other goal, as ITC uses terms such as "environment", "environmental sustainability" and "environmental impact" interchangeably in its documents.

49. The Centre's focus on youth and trade aims to contribute to the post-2015 development agenda and the Five-Year Action Agenda of the Secretary-General to strengthen inclusiveness and sustainability. The youth and trade programme was launched in mid-2014 with a pilot project in Morocco on youth entrepreneurship and trade incubators. Overall, the youth and trade programme examines how the Centre's existing tools can be adapted to serve the needs of youth and considers new tools that are needed to strengthen youth employment globally. The programme intends to mainstream the issue of youth as a cross-cutting issue across the Centre's project portfolio. Similar to the case of environment (see para. 48 above, OIOS notes that 21 of a total of 44 documents reviewed by the Project Approval Committee in 2014 contained consideration of youth at the project design stage.

50. The Centre's best-developed mainstreaming architecture surrounds gender. The 2006 evaluation of ITC highlighted the need to strengthen this area. The Centre's conceptual framework for mainstreaming gender policy and planning now requires cascading of gender to project development. In 2010, ITC undertook a gender assessment to gauge its progress, noting that only 24.0 per cent of its projects reflected a gender dimension. It launched its gender mainstreaming policy in 2011, followed by a gender action plan for the period 2011-2015. ITC performed well in terms of the 2013 System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, especially compared to its 2012 score and to other United Nations actors. ITC appointed three main "business owners" to create a web of shared responsibility for different performance indicators. ITC has also developed the enhanced integrated framework programme, a gender mainstreaming module used by least developed countries in their diagnostic trade integration study. ITC has gender-targeted technical assistance programmes such as ACCESS! and the Women and Trade Programme, and is committed to mainstreaming gender across all programmes and collecting gender-disaggregated data on its projects. In 2014, the Centre mandated basic gender training for all staff and established a policy framework to support gender equality on the basis of a review of human resource policies and processes. In 2015, it appointed a gender focal point at the P-4 level.

51. Despite these commendable advances, substantive integration of gender into the Centre's projects remains weak. While gender-disaggregated data on development outputs and outcomes are collected, monitoring and reporting on gender equity has been unsystematic. The 2014 evaluation of ITC concluded that

[24] ITC, "Greening trade: an ITC strategy for mainstreaming environmental sustainability", 2014.

gender dimensions were inconsistently integrated into project designs, with explicit attention to gender largely limited to those projects specifically targeting women. So, too, did the OIOS re-analysis of 56 projects: beyond the handful of programmes with an explicit primary focus on gender, few projects integrated a gender perspective.[25] Moreover, the OIOS analysis of 44 projects reviewed by the Project Approval Committee showed that only 10 projects demonstrated an explicit focus on gender equity, while gender dimensions were only implicit in 15 and gender was not taken into consideration at all in 19.

52. Progress has continued on all three cross-cutting issues. In 2014, ITC introduced guidelines for assigning development marker ratings to improve the clarity and consideration of all three issues and to foster more coherence and consistency in the project design and project review process. The guidelines provide criteria and ratings enabling programme managers to more systematically consider the impacts, risks, opportunities, challenges and diversity a project may have on each development marker. The results of these initiatives remain to be seen, however.

IV. Conclusion

53. The overall success of ITC in delivering its project interventions is well established at the output level. However, robust evidence for the effects of these interventions on the Centre's targeted beneficiaries is largely non-existent, and OIOS was only able to gather anecdotal evidence of such effects. This information gap persists in project design documents, which are increasingly clear in articulating these intended results. More fundamentally, the Centre's demand-driven approach to defining its programme of interventions has hindered it from achieving broader relevance and, by extension, broader effectiveness where it matters most. Though exhibiting a strong client orientation, this demand-driven approach does not guarantee that ITC prioritizes those countries and industries where its assistance is most needed or where it stands to have the greatest impact at a scale commensurate with its corporate objectives or its United Nations mandate.

54. ITC has publically signalled strong resolve to tackle these and other key challenges, and has reportedly embarked on a number of initiatives to address them. ITC should continue, and in some cases accelerate, implementation of these initiatives, and launch other initiatives pledged but not yet started, to maximize its effectiveness, relevance and efficiency moving forward.

V. Recommendations

55. OIOS makes five recommendations, all of which are important according to its criticality rating system. Three of these recommendations underscore and build on the four "strategic recommendations" emanating from the 2014 evaluation of ITC.[26] These are recommendations 1 (consistent with strategic recommendation 3),

[25] Of the 56 projects, 28 consider gender.

[26] The strategic recommendations of the 2014 evaluation are found on pages 115 to 117 of the evaluation report, which is publically available at www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/About_ITC/How_ITC_Works/Evaluation/1.%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf.

2 (consistent with strategic recommendation 1, and in part with strategic recommendation 4) and 3 (consistent with, though broader than, strategic recommendations 2 and 4, and consistent with, though narrower than, strategic recommendation 3). Recommendations 4 and 5, by contrast, represent new elements not explicitly covered by the 2014 evaluation.

Recommendation 1 [see paras. 3, 7-9, 14-17, 25-30, 42, 48, 54]

56. The Office of the Executive Director of ITC should directly and regularly monitor operational units' implementation of the action plans formulated in response to the 2014 evaluation of ITC and the present evaluation, and report regularly on the implementation status of both action plans to its parent organizations and donors through the Joint Advisory Group.

Indicator of achievement: Implementation of action plans regularly monitored, and implementation status regularly reported to the Joint Advisory Group, directly by the Office of the Executive Director

Recommendation 2 [see paras. 5, 12, 14-17, 25, 29, 31-45]

57. To enhance efforts to strengthen its results orientation, ITC should incrementally adopt a more holistic, data-driven approach to planning and budgeting while still seeking alignment with donor and client priorities. Anchored in the 2016-2017 strategic framework and 2015-2017 strategic plan, this approach should include:

(a) A needs assessment methodology to ensure that ITC prioritizes its corporate work, programmes and projects across regions, countries and industries where its expertise is most needed and where it can make the most difference in relation to other actors;

(b) A medium-term strategy for gradually moving the organization toward this more holistic, needs-based and data-driven approach, to complement the demand-driven model.

Indicator of achievement: Documents drafted and their meaningful implementation monitored

Recommendation 3 [see paras. 16-17, 26, 31-41]

58. To ensure the cascading of overall corporate priorities to the operational level, the programme and project approval protocol should be revised to ensure that all projects adequately address the following areas before being approved:

(a) A clear indication of how the intervention's objectives align with identified corporate priorities;

(b) Evidence that a needs assessment has been undertaken, alongside beneficiary and donor consultations, in prioritizing the country and industry at hand with the specific intervention;

(c) Evidence that key risks have been identified and assessed, and a corresponding risk management plan enacted;

(d) A monitoring and evaluation plan for the intervention, commensurate with the intervention's size and overall risk profile, including indicators speaking to results achieved for assisted beneficiaries.

Indicator of achievement: Revised programme and project approval protocol reflecting a clear cascading of overall corporate priorities, resulting in strong alignment between projects and corporate priorities in an increasing number of projects

Recommendation 4 [see paras. 13, 18-24, 26-30, 42-45, 53 and 54]

59. ITC should improve its capacity to generate credible evidence on the results its interventions have achieved for its beneficiaries and clients, and on these interventions' cost-effectiveness. Such improvements entail, at minimum:

(a) Development of a risk-based evaluation plan, identifying higher-risk interventions requiring individualized evaluation attention and lower-risk interventions for which a bundled evaluation approach is adequate;

(b) A monitoring and evaluation capacity development plan for equipping programme staff with monitoring and evaluation skills;

(c) Continued roll-out of the integrated project portal, including finalization and use of the costing methodology;

(d) Completion of the impact assessment methodology, ensuring that these methods include non-perceptual, verifiable documentary evidence of impacts to complement the perceptual evidence garnered through the client relationship management database;

(e) Development of clear guidelines on what constitutes a client in the client relationship management database;

(f) Revision of the Centre's 2008 evaluation policy and of the reporting lines of the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit to ensure that the present recommendation (and aspects of recommendation 5) are adequately implemented at the direct behest of the Executive Director of ITC.

Indicator of achievement: The actions described in the recommendation are undertaken, and their meaningful follow-through monitored, resulting in credible evidence on the results interventions have achieved for the Centre's beneficiaries and clients, and at what cost

Recommendation 5 [see paras. 46-52]

60. ITC should accelerate the integration of cross-cutting issues into its projects. This includes:

(a) Strengthened capacity-development support for promoting integration of cross-cutting issues into project design;

(b) Incorporating into the project approval process an appraisal of proposals' attention to all three cross-cutting areas, in accordance with the Centre's 2014 guidance on Project Approval Committee development markers on the cross-cutting issues;

(c) Sharpening conceptual clarity on the Centre's approach to the environment, clearly articulating whether the 2014 environment mainstreaming strategy implies heightened attention to minimizing the Centre's environmental footprint, explicitly supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and/or innovations that address environmental challenges, or something else.

Indicator of achievement: The actions described in the recommendation are undertaken, and their meaningful follow-through monitored, resulting in a clearer integration of cross-cutting issues in an increasing number of projects.

(*Signed*) Carman L. **Lapointe**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

19 March 2015

Annex[a]

Management response to the evaluation of the International Trade Centre by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, 18 March 2015

1. The management of the of the International Trade Centre (ITC) is pleased to submit its response to the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on its evaluation of ITC. ITC management welcomes the report and thanks the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS for its assessment of the organization. Oversight services are invariably very welcome at ITC, as a key vehicle for accountability, learning and transparency, even where, as in this case, an OIOS evaluation comes in the footsteps of another comprehensive evaluation.

2. In July 2012, ITC donors decided to carry out a full evaluation of ITC, independent both of ITC management and of OIOS. The terms of reference of this evaluation were agreed to in February 2013. The evaluation that followed was exhaustive, wide-ranging and comprehensive. It was carried out in 2013-2014. The independent evaluator, a company chosen through a competitive selection process, was managed through an arms-length committee of member country representatives, including donors and beneficiaries. The independent evaluator delivered its report in June 2014. The report was well received by all ITC stakeholders and was, by all accounts including our own, a reasonable, robust and useful analysis of the progress made in the period 2006-2013. ITC has since crafted a full management response, which was endorsed by its governing body, the Joint Advisory Group, in January 2015.

3. The OIOS evaluators began their work in mid-2014. ITC has cooperated fully with them and was supportive of their attempt to ensure that their approach added value to the prior evaluation. In essence this was to validate, or otherwise, the findings of the independent evaluation. This was a pragmatic response to a situation created by factors over which they apparently had little control. The team has been very responsive and ITC management has had adequate opportunities to comments on drafts of the report.

4. Overall, ITC management welcomes the final report. It has considered the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report and is able to accept all five of the recommendations. But it does not do so without a number of caveats, especially regarding recommendation 2, which states that, "to enhance efforts to strengthen its results orientation, ITC should incrementally adopt a more holistic, data-driven approach to planning and budgeting while still seeking alignment with donor and client priorities". These caveats are detailed in the ITC action plan.

5. Recommendation 2 presents the greatest challenge to ITC because it can be seen as ignoring the practical constraints on a small agency like ITC. Whereas larger agencies with a far wider reach can, and should, invest in thorough, in-depth and universal needs analyses, for a small agency like ITC this is very challenging in practical terms, a view shared by the independent evaluators. Of course ITC can and

[a] In the present annex, OIOS presents the full text of comments from the International Trade Centre. This practice has been instituted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.

will take this recommendation on board as a direction in which to move, but it will do so carefully, to make sure that it is complementary to the valuable role the Centre plays as a trusted broker between demand for its services and the funding that is available for them.

6. The OIOS report is a useful tool for emphasizing areas for improvement in the future. ITC also views it as a validation of the independent evaluation that preceded it, judging it generally satisfactory in quality and credibility in the areas it covered, having harnessed the best evidence available at the time, and having been sufficiently independent. More importantly, it is also a validation of the direction of travel of the organization as a whole. ITC is an organization that has made significant, concrete progress in recent years. As a result, ITC is growing and expanding its assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises in the developing world to help them internationalize.

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Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Programme questions: evaluation

Evaluation of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 64/289, established the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), to be operational by 1 January 2011. Its mandate includes normative, operational and coordination work in support of the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

OIOS examined the relevance and effectiveness of UN-Women in achieving its mandate through normative support work and its link with operational activities. It used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, including content analysis, interviews, surveys, field missions, meta-analysis of secondary data, and direct observation.

Despite resource levels being below what was envisioned, UN-Women has increased the visibility of, and attention to, gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN-Women has increased the opportunities for related issues to be integrated into member State deliberations and related normative outcomes, as well as in the work of the United Nations system. At the regional and country levels, the Entity's normative support work has contributed to elevating those issues in United Nations country programming and activities and strengthened dialogue with government and development partners.

* E/AC.51/2015/1.

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UN-Women has also achieved positive results in strengthening the normative framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women. It has supported the adoption of gender-specific norms and standards and promoted the integration of the subject into global and sectoral agendas. It was particularly effective in working to achieve the agreed conclusions of the fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the proposed post-2015 agenda. UN-Women also strengthened its engagement with the Security Council and supported the expansion of the normative framework with regard to the role that women play in all stages of conflict prevention and resolution and recovery. UN-Women has contributed to stronger national legislation and policies, in particular on ending violence against women, gender-responsive budgeting, and women's leadership in politics and decision-making.

The Entity's support to the implementation of gender-specific norms at the global, regional and national levels has been challenged by several factors. In addition to insufficient resources and factors beyond the Entity's direct control, such as a lack of political will and government capacity and cultural resistance to gender equality and the empowerment of women, these include the broad nature of the six impact areas of the UN-Women strategic plan and insufficient linkages between UN-Women headquarters and field offices, including between its normative and operational work.

In order to effectively support the implementation of the normative framework, UN-Women has needed to coordinate with its United Nations partners, and it has had some success in this regard, in particular in countries where it has a presence. However, UN-Women has not fully capitalized on its United Nations partnerships to fully leverage the comparative advantages of other entities with a greater field presence and wider networks, and its roles and responsibilities regarding coordination in supporting the implementation of the normative framework have not been fully defined.

OIOS makes the following four important recommendations to UN-Women:

(a) In the context of the midterm review of its strategic plan in 2016, define how it will address key issues within its six impact areas;

(b) Further enhance the synergies between its two subprogrammes by making linkages between them more systematic, regular and, where appropriate, formal;

(c) Further strengthen the existing linkages between headquarters and field offices, including enhanced support to field offices in the implementation of the framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(d) In consultation with its United Nations partners, further clarify complementarities with regard to implementing the normative framework.

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I. Introduction

1. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) identified the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for evaluation on the basis of a risk assessment undertaken by OIOS to identify Secretariat programme evaluation priorities. The Committee for Programme and Coordination selected the programme evaluation of UN-Women for consideration at its fifty-fifth session, in June 2015 (see A/68/16, para. 158). The General Assembly endorsed the selection in its resolution 68/20.

2. The general frame of reference for OIOS is set out in General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B, 54/244 and 59/272, as well as ST/SGB/273, which, in accordance with Article 97 of the Charter of the United Nations, authorizes OIOS to initiate, carry out and report on any action that it considers necessary to fulfil its responsibilities. OIOS evaluation is provided for in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8).[1]

3. Within this context, the objective of the evaluation was to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance and effectiveness of UN-Women in achieving its mandate in support of gender equality and the empowerment of women through normative support work and its link with operational activities. The topic of the evaluation emerged from a scoping phase described in detail in the evaluation inception report. Given the need for UN-Women to strengthen the linkages between intergovernmental decisions and the implementation of those decisions on the ground, its normative support work is critical to the achievement of its overall objectives and mandate. The evaluation has been conducted in conformity with the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group.

II. Background

History, mandate and normative framework

4. In its resolution 64/289, the General Assembly established UN-Women as a composite entity with normative, operational and coordination functions to be operational by 1 January 2011, by consolidating the mandates of the following entities:

(a) Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women;

(b) Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat;

(c) United Nations Development Fund for Women;

[1] Regulation 7.1: "The objective of evaluation is: (a) to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives; (b) to enable the Secretariat and Member States to engage in systematic reflection, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the main programmes of the Organization by altering their content and, if necessary, reviewing their objectives."

(d) International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

5. UN-Women was assigned to lead, coordinate and promote the accountability of the United Nations system on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The General Assembly decided that the Charter of the United Nations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex) and applicable United Nations instruments, standards and resolutions that support, address and contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of women would provide the general framework for the Entity's work programme.

6. UN-Women provides guidance and technical support to all member States, at their request, on gender equality, the empowerment and rights of women and gender mainstreaming. It is mandated to work in consultation with national machineries for women and civil society organizations and to operate as part of the resident coordinator system within the United Nations country team by leading and coordinating the team's work on gender equality and the empowerment of women under the leadership of the resident coordinator.

Structure and governance

7. UN-Women operates under an Executive Director at the Under-Secretary-General level. It comprises subprogramme 1, Intergovernmental support, coordination and strategic partnerships, and subprogramme 2, Policy and programme activities, each led by an Assistant Secretary-General. Its structure also includes the Management and Administration Division, the Human Resources Office and the Independent Evaluation Office.

8. In the past two years, UN-Women developed its regional architecture to identify efficiencies and strengthen field capacity. In 2014, UN-Women had its headquarters in New York; it also had 6 regional offices, 6 multi-country offices, 48 country offices and programme presence in 30 countries.

Global strategic priorities and results framework

9. As noted in its strategic plans for 2011-2013 and 2014-2017, its results focus on six impact areas:

(a) Women lead and participate in decision-making at all levels;

(b) Women, especially the poorest and most excluded, are economically empowered and benefit from development;

(c) Women and girls live free from violence;

(d) Peace and security and humanitarian action are shaped by women's leadership and participation;

(e) Governance and national planning reflect accountability for gender equality commitments and priorities;

(f) A comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms, policies, and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women exists and is applied through action by Governments and other stakeholders at all levels.

10. The strategy for achieving these results is to bring together and strengthen coherence among the Entity's four main functions:

(a) Intergovernmental support;

(b) United Nations system coordination;

(c) Operational assistance to member States and civil society organizations;

(d) Advocacy and communication.

11. As UN-Women receives resources from the United Nations regular budget, it is mandated by the General Assembly to prepare a biennial strategic framework.[2]

Resources

12. The Entity's projected resources for the biennium 2014-2015 amount to $716 million, 98 per cent of which come from extrabudgetary contributions.[3] UN-Women also administers and mobilizes resources for the Fund for Gender Equality and the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.

13. According to the proposed programme budget of UN-Women for the biennium 2014-2015 (A/68/6 (Sect. 17)), UN-Women had 471 staff posts, of which 45 were funded through the regular budget and 426 through extrabudgetary contributions. As at October 2014, the UN-Women staff list included 757 positions, of which 38 per cent were funded from additional sources. Sixty-eight per cent of staff were based in the field.

Normative support work

14. OIOS used the United Nations Evaluation Group's definition of normative work approved by all of the Group's members, including UN-Women, in 2012: "the support to the development of norms and standards in conventions, declarations, regulatory frameworks, agreements, guidelines, codes of practice and other standard-setting instruments at the global, regional and national levels. Normative work also includes the support to the implementation of these instruments at the policy level, i.e. their integration into legislation, policies and development plans, and to their implementation at the programme level."[4] This definition is generally concurrent with the Entity's own description of normative support work.

15. Within the context of the definition above, the Entity's normative support work contributes to results at three levels:

(a) Development of norms and standards (in conventions, declarations, guidelines and other standard-setting instruments) at the global, regional and national levels;

(b) Implementation of norms and standards at the policy level;

(c) Implementation of norms and standards at the programme level.

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[2] During the period of the evaluation, the Entity's work was guided by the strategic framework for the period 2014-2015 (A/67/6/Rev.1, programme 14).

[3] Estimated regular budget resources for the biennium 2014-2015 amounted to $15.7 million (A/68/6 (Sect. 17)).

[4] United Nations Evaluation Group Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work in the United Nations System.

III. Methodology

16. As previously noted, OIOS assessed the Entity's support to both the development and the implementation of norms and standards, including operational activities. It assessed the Entity's United Nations partnerships and coordination activities within the specific context of how those relate to its normative support work. It did not directly assess the Entity's partnerships with civil society organizations.

17. The evaluation used the following combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods:

(a) Document review: content analysis of documents, including intergovernmental resolutions; UN-Women strategic plans, country strategic notes, budgets, annual reports and coordination strategy; United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, resident coordinator reports and country reports on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;

(b) Interviews: 161 semi-structured interviews with UN-Women headquarters and field staff and representatives of member States, civil society and United Nations partners;

(c) Field missions: visits to Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, India, Senegal and Thailand;

(d) Surveys: web-based surveys of:

(i) All UN-Women staff;[5]

(ii) UN-Women civil society advisory groups;[6]

(iii) Resident coordinators;[7]

(iv) UN-Women Executive Board;[8]

(v) Commission on the Status of Women;[9]

(e) Twitter analysis: structured analysis of information from UN-Women accounts;

(f) Meta-analysis: review of 15 UN-Women evaluation reports;

[5] The survey was conducted from September to November 2014 and sent to 689 headquarters and field staff. A total of 269 staff responded, a 39 per cent response rate.

[6] The survey was conducted from September to October 2014 and sent to all 281 members of civil society advisory groups. A total of 177 members responded, a 63 per cent response rate.

[7] The survey was sent to countries with and those without a UN-Women field presence. The former was conducted from September to October 2014 and sent to 54 resident coordinators, of whom 26 responded (a 48 per cent response rate). The latter was conducted from September to October 2014 and sent to 77 resident coordinators, of whom 24 responded (a 31 per cent response rate).

[8] The survey was conducted from August to October 2014 and sent to all 59 Executive Board members. A total of 10 responded, a 17 per cent response rate. Owing to the low response rate, data from that survey were not used.

[9] The survey was conducted from August to October 2014 and sent to 63 former and current delegates of the Commission on the Status of Women. A total of 11 responded, a 17 per cent response rate. Owing to the low response rate, data from that survey were not used.

(g) Direct observation of meetings of the UN-Women Executive Board, General Assembly committees and advocacy events organized by UN-Women.

18. An independent gender expert consultant reviewed the evaluation terms of reference, data collection instruments, preliminary results and draft report.

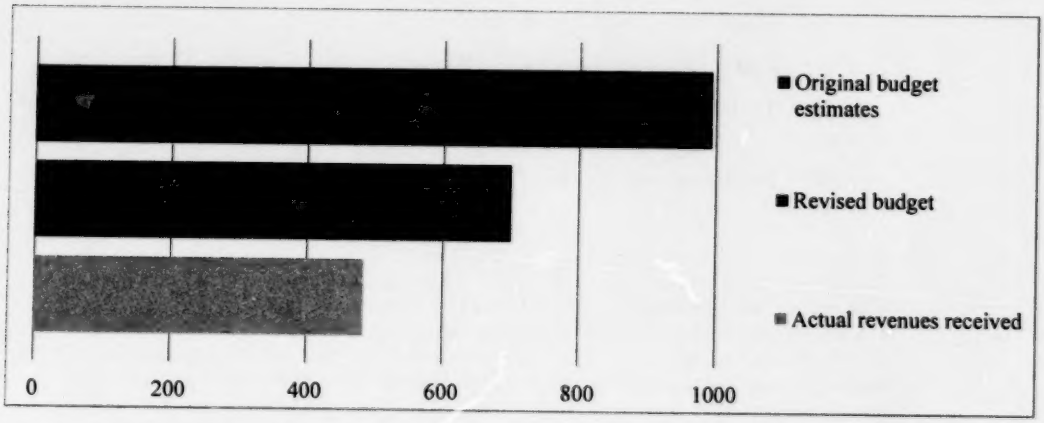
19. OIOS consulted UN-Women during the conduct of the evaluation and expresses thanks to it for its cooperation and assistance. Its response to the draft report is contained in the annex to the present report.

IV. Evaluation results

A. Despite resource levels being lower than originally envisioned, UN-Women has enhanced the visibility of, and attention to, gender equality and the empowerment of women through its normative support work

20. The level of voluntary contributions received by UN-Women — on which it heavily depends to deliver its mandate — has been significantly lower than originally estimated. Despite a 20 per cent increase from 2011 to 2013, the level of voluntary contributions in 2012-2013 was 51 per cent below the original estimate in 2011[10] and 31 per cent below the revised 2012 budget that the UN-Women Executive Board deemed necessary to deliver on the organization's mandate.[11]

Figure I
UN-Women voluntary contributions, 2012-2013, compared with original and revised budgets
(Millions of United States dollars)



Source: A/66/6 (Sect. 17), UNW/2013/7, list of voluntary contributions to UN-Women (2013), UN-Women integrated budget estimates for UN-Women for the biennium 2014-2015.

[10] A/66/6 (Sect. 17).
[11] Integrated budget estimates for UN-Women for the biennium 2014-2015 (UNW/2013/7).

21. Although the lower-than-estimated level of resources has significantly affected the capacity of UN-Women to effectively implement its normative mandate (as discussed in result C), UN-Women has improved the visibility of gender equality and the empowerment of women and increased opportunities for their integration into member State deliberations and related normative outcomes and the work of the United Nations system. Nearly all member States, United Nations partners and UN-Women staff interviewed asserted that gender equality and the empowerment of women, as championed by UN-Women senior management and country programme representatives, were addressed more prominently than before. Staff and stakeholders volunteered that increasing visibility and awareness of gender equality and the empowerment of women was one of the three most important results that the Entity's normative support work had achieved since its creation. All agreed that, without UN-Women as the sole United Nations entity with its dedicated mandate, the discourse and legislative outcomes on those issues would not exist.

22. At the global level, UN-Women leadership created and supported opportunities to discuss and strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women in intergovernmental and other meetings. In addition to the technical support offered to member States during the negotiation of new norms, UN-Women co-sponsored high-level meetings and side events to raise awareness and promote the integration of concerns related to its mandate in various sectors. These included environment and climate change, humanitarian affairs, sustainable urbanization, indigenous peoples' rights, youth and health. For example, the collaboration between UN-Women and the Peacebuilding Support Office during the seventh session of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission, in 2013, resulted in the adoption of a declaration on women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding (PBC/7/OC/L.1). In 2012, UN-Women organized several events on strengthening women's access to justice and promoted the integration of gender perspectives into the report of the Secretary-General (A/66/749) in preparation for the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the rule of law at the national and international levels, held in 2012.

23. At the regional and country levels, the Entity's normative support work strengthened the dialogue on its mandate with government and development partners. In Mali, for example, the Conference on Women's Leadership in the Sahel Region gathered 40 women ministers, activists and experts to promote women's role in crisis management.[12] In Colombia, the Entity's engagement prompted the mobilization of women's civil society organizations and a greater representation of women at peace talks. The "Gender equality in political governance" project in the Pacific enhanced public support for the issue, which resulted in increased demand for gender equality in government programmes.[13] In Senegal, UN-Women enhanced the visibility of the United Nations joint programme on gender equality and the empowerment of women and advocated with ministries the use of gender-responsive tools in public management.

24. The Entity's normative support work has further contributed to elevating the subject in United Nations country programming and activities. A majority of

[12] Organized by the European Union, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel and UN-Women.

[13] Evaluation of the "Gender equality in political governance" project by UN-Women and the Australian Agency for International Development (2012).

resident coordinator survey respondents (67 per cent) stated that greater visibility of the norms and standards was the main added value that UN-Women brought to their countries of operation, owing to its exclusive focus on gender equality and significant advocacy efforts. At the country level, UN-Women has contributed to more United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks with increased numbers of joint programmes on gender equality, greater capacity-building of United Nations staff around the subject and greater use of gender scorecards.

25. UN-Women effectively raised the visibility of gender equality norms and standards among the general public, particularly regarding the normative framework for ending violence against women. In the context of the Secretary-General's campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women, UN-Women led efforts to make this a public issue. Other examples of the Entity's initiatives in raising public awareness are shown in the box below.

Examples of UN-Women public awareness campaigns around gender equality norms and standards

The "**Ready for the list**" campaign in 2014 aimed to raise public awareness of the importance of having more women in decision-making in Uruguay, in accordance with the quota electoral law of 2009. It featured well-known Uruguayan artists, businesswomen and journalists and aired on television channels across the country and used social networks.

As the secretariat to the UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign, UN-Women organized events around the world as part of the yearly **16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence**. In 2013, the theme was "Safe spaces for women and girls", and UN-Women promoted the recommendations of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

26. UN-Women has effectively used social media and public figures to raise awareness of its mandate among the general public. Through Twitter, UN-Women not only promoted its work and highlighted its good practices but also forwarded information published by newspapers and others to enhance awareness of the new and remaining challenges to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women worldwide. The UN-Women social media audience grew to more than 1.9 million followers in 2014. At the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in 2014, UN-Women reached an audience of 47 million Twitter users, compared with 28 million in 2013.

27. UN-Women has effectively deployed its advocacy role to promote increased dialogue around its mandate. For example, in the lead-up to the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UN-Women organized approximately 100 global, regional and national events addressing the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform and forged a media compact with 30 media organizations worldwide. Starting in 2011, UN-Women organized, in

partnership with other United Nations entities, 25 to 30 open days each year on women and peace and security to commemorate the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), as well as to promote dialogue among civil society representatives, activists and United Nations staff.

B. UN-Women has achieved positive results in strengthening the normative framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women

UN-Women has successfully supported the adoption of global and regional norms and standards

28. Within an often challenging political and cultural environment, UN-Women has strengthened the normative framework by supporting the adoption of gender-specific norms and standards and promoting the integration of its mandate into global and sectoral agendas. Particularly, nearly half of UN-Women headquarters staff (48 per cent), one third of United Nations partners at headquarters (35 per cent) and one fourth of UN-Women field staff (25 per cent) interviewed indicated the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the proposal of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals, together with the integration of gender-sensitive targets for the other goals, as the most significant normative support result to which UN-Women had contributed at the global level. The Entity's 2013 position paper entitled "A transformative stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment: imperatives and key components" constituted a solid basis for member States and stakeholder consultations and was used to facilitate dialogue at 42 meetings at the national and regional levels. UN-Women substantially contributed to proceedings of the Open Working Group: it provided advice to the technical support team and other working groups and co-led with the United Nations Children's Fund the global thematic consultation on addressing inequalities.

29. The Entity's engagement in the process leading to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Goals led to the mainstreaming of its mandate into the outcome document of the Conference (General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex). In parallel, UN-Women effectively supported the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change towards the approval of the decision on gender balance and improving the participation of women in Framework Convention negotiations and in the representation of parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol (decision 23/CP.18) and the Lima work programme on gender (decision 18/CP.20). UN-Women also supported the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in 2014; references to its mandate were included throughout the outcome document of the Conference (General Assembly resolution 69/15, annex).

30. The Entity's work with the Commission on the Status of Women has been particularly effective. Most UN-Women staff interviewed at headquarters (64 per cent) mentioned the achievement of agreed conclusions at the end of fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth sessions of the Commission as one of the key results regarding the adoption of gender-specific norms and standards to which had UN-Women contributed during the past three years. Those conclusions advanced the normative framework on ending violence against women (with an emphasis on prevention

services) and actions needed to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls.

31. The Entity's normative support work has also contributed to important results at the global level in the area of women and peace and security. They included the adoption of Security Council resolution 2122 (2013), which put in place stronger measures to enable women to participate in conflict resolution and recovery; and the adoption by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of general recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations. Nearly one third of United Nations partners interviewed at headquarters (29 per cent) noted that UN-Women had strengthened its engagement with the Council, supporting the participation of civil society representatives and ensuring consistent language in Council outcomes.

32. UN-Women has contributed to greater gender mainstreaming in General Assembly outcomes. The share of Assembly resolutions that included a gender perspective increased from 32 per cent in 2011 to 42 per cent in 2013.[14] While the Third Committee maintained the highest share of resolutions that integrated gender equality and the empowerment of women (68 per cent), the share of Second and Fifth Committee decisions with a gender perspective doubled from 2011 to 2013.[15]

33. The Entity's revised approach towards the preparation of strategic intergovernmental meetings has contributed to the achievement of normative outcomes. According to UN-Women staff, key elements of that approach included:

(a) Strengthened evidence and knowledge base for discussion, including inputs from United Nations and civil society partners;

(b) Early engagement with member States through formal and informal meetings at the global, regional and country levels to achieve political consensus;

(c) Internal coordination of inputs from all UN-Women divisions and field offices through the establishment of dedicated task forces (such as a working group on the post-2015 agenda);

(d) Coherent United Nations position on the themes being discussed;

(e) Sustained advocacy efforts.

34. UN-Women, including its regional offices, has also contributed to enhancing the normative framework at the regional level. It has effectively supported regional intergovernmental bodies, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Council of Europe, in the process leading up to the approval of conventions and declarations, particularly in the area of ending violence against women.[16]

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[14] A/69/182.

[15] Integration of a gender perspective in the work of the General Assembly, UN-Women infographic, 2014.

[16] Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Elimination of Violence Against Children in ASEAN (2013); Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2013).

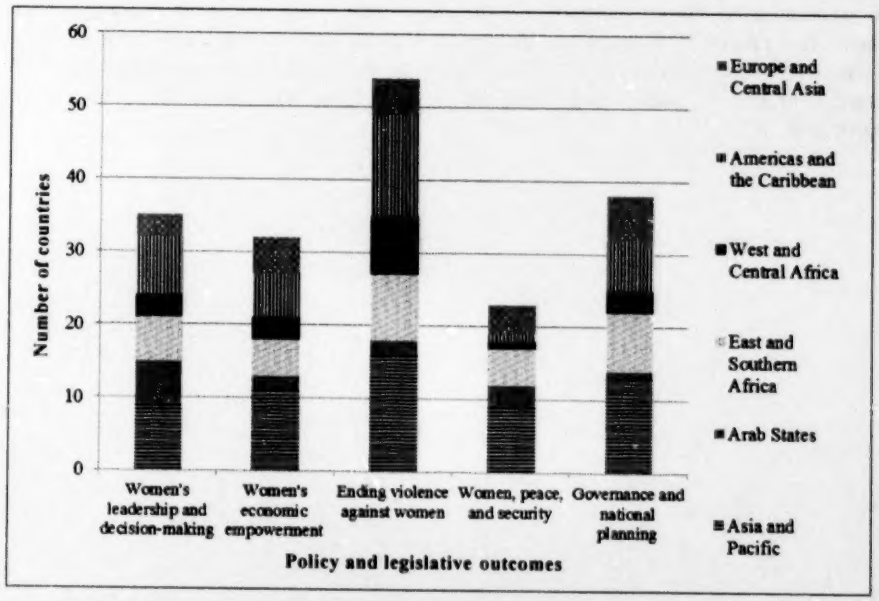
UN-Women has contributed to stronger national legislation and policies

35. At the national level, the Entity's normative advisory support to Governments included ensuring that international commitments (such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women or agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women) were reflected in national development agendas; promoting legal frameworks aligned with those commitments; and supporting Governments and civil society organizations in monitoring implementation (e.g. through reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the universal periodic review). In several countries, including the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mexico and Uzbekistan, UN-Women engaged with civil society organizations and provided technical support to national women's ministries to integrate the Committee's concluding observations into national gender-specific programmes. The civil society advisory group mechanism provided a forum for enhancing the Entity's advocacy of gender-specific norms.

36. In its annual reports, UN-Women notes the achievement of normative results at the country and regional levels in all six impact areas of its strategic plan, shown in figure II. It is noted in the same reports, however, that UN-Women was somewhat more successful in promoting national legislation and policies on ending violence against women, gender-responsive budgeting and women's leadership in politics and decision-making than in promoting women's economic empowerment and women and peace and security (in contrast to its success in the latter at the global level).

Figure II

Countries where UN-Women contributed to policy and legislative outcomes, by impact area



Source: OIOS analysis of UN-Women annual reports, E/CN.6/2012/2, E/CN.6/2013/2, E/CN.6/2014/2, UNW/2012/4, UNW/2013/3, UNW/2014/2.

37. Specific examples of those results included:

- Strengthened policy and legal frameworks on ending violence against women in 54 countries
- Gender-responsive national planning and budget documents in 38 countries
- Quota systems and reforms to promote the participation of women in electoral and political processes in 35 countries
- Support to national Governments in enhancing labour, land, property and inheritance rights through legal and policy reforms, and incorporation of women's economic empowerment in national plans in 32 countries
- Development of 15 national action plans on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and support to constitutional and electoral reforms in eight post-conflict countries

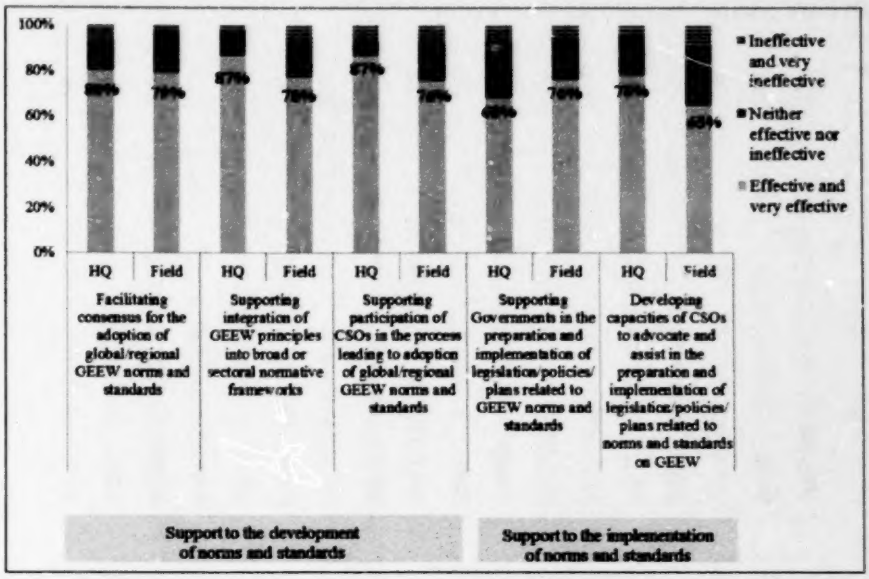
C. UN-Women support to the implementation of gender equality norms and standards at the global, regional and national levels has been challenged by several factors

UN-Women has been generally effective in supporting the development and the implementation of norms and standards, but has greater success in the former than the latter

38. The United Nations Evaluation Group's definition of normative support work includes both direct support to the development of norms and standards and support to implementing those standards at the policy and programme levels. Figure III shows that most UN-Women headquarters and field staff surveyed rated the Entity's normative support activities effective; however, they rated activities supporting the implementation of norms and standards less effective than those supporting their development.

Figure III

Effectiveness of UN-Women normative support work by activity, rated by UN-Women headquarters and field staff


100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
Ineffective and very ineffective
Neither effective nor ineffective
Effective and very effective
HQ
Field
Facilitating consensus for the adoption of global/regional GEEW norms and standards
Supporting integration of GEEW principles into broad or sectoral normative frameworks
Supporting participation of CSOs in the process leading to adoption of global/regional GEEW norms and standards
Supporting Governments in the preparation and implementation of legislation/policies/ plans related to GEEW norms and standards
Developing capacities of CSOs to advocate and assist in the preparation and implementation of legislation/policies/ plans related to norms and standards on GEEW
Support to the development of norms and standards
Support to the implementation of norms and standards

Source: OIOS survey.

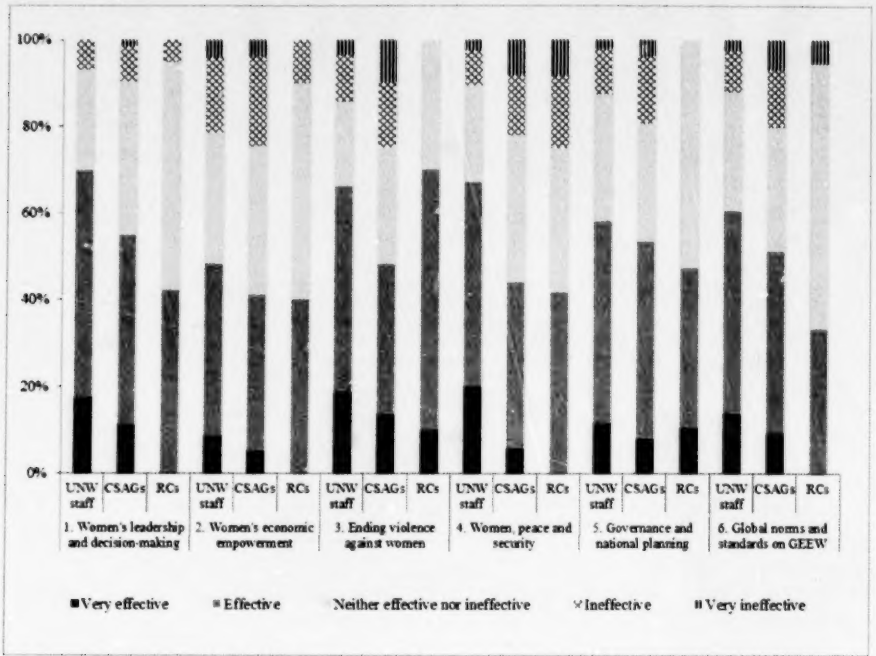
Abbreviations: CSOs, civil society organizations; GEEW, gender equality and the empowerment of women.

39. While acknowledging that supporting the implementation of norms and standards was more challenging than supporting their development, most UN-Women staff (97 per cent at headquarters and 90 per cent in the field), a majority of representatives of civil society organizations (61 per cent) and half of United Nations and government representatives interviewed stated that UN-Women had been generally more effective in supporting development than implementation. The indicators reported as "almost on track" and "off track" in the Executive Director's most recent report to the Executive Board on progress made on the UN-Women strategic plan, 2011-2013 (UNW/2014/2), referred mostly to implementation activities.

40. As shown in figure IV, UN-Women staff, civil society advisory group and resident coordinator survey respondents gave mixed ratings to the Entity's normative support work in achieving results in its six impact areas over the past three years. UN-Women staff gave positive ratings to all of their work, with the exception of women's economic empowerment. Civil society advisory group survey respondents rated UN-Women positively in three areas and negatively in the other three. Resident coordinators gave positive ratings only to the Entity's normative support work in the area of ending violence against women, which also had the highest number of outputs in its 2014 progress report (UNW/2014/2).

Figure IV

Effectiveness of UN-Women normative support work in achieving results in impact areas, rated by UN-Women staff, members of UN-Women civil society advisory groups and resident coordinators



Source: OIOS surveys.

Abbreviations: CSAGs, civil society advisory groups; GEEW, gender equality and the empowerment of women; RCs, resident coordinators.

Insufficient resources and other factors beyond the Entity's direct control have made supporting the implementation of norms and standards challenging

41. Insufficient resources have particularly hindered the Entity's capacity in the field, which is critical for the successful implementation of global norms and standards. The majority of UN-Women Professional staff (63 per cent, including national staff) are now based in one of its 84 field offices.[17] However, the average size of a UN-Women field office (excluding regional offices) is 2.8 staff, and UN-Women is represented by only one person in 27 countries. The Entity's capacity in the field is particularly limited in West and Central Africa, which account for only 8 per cent of UN-Women field staff, and the Arab States, which account for 11 per cent.

42. Most UN-Women staff surveyed (83 per cent) stated that inadequate human resources in the field negatively influenced the Entity's capacity to support Governments in norm formulation and implementation and to develop the capacity of civil society organizations to advocate gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN-Women field capacity has also been inadequate to fulfil demands from

[17] OIOS elaboration of UN-Women data.

Governments and meet stakeholder expectations. For example, a high-level stakeholder interviewed in India stated that project proposals often came unfunded, and the limited size of the UN-Women office in Senegal hampered the organization's capacity to follow up on commitments with a national ministry. Nearly half of United Nations partners interviewed in the field (46 per cent), including resident coordinators, stated that the Entity's high staff turnover and insufficient capacity to follow up on coordination meetings and sustain operations was the most notable challenge that they faced in their country of operations. The majority of resident coordinators surveyed in countries where UN-Women has no physical presence (63 per cent) reported the absence of a fully fledged office as the biggest challenge that they faced in their working relationship with UN-Women.

43. Several other factors beyond its direct control made it difficult for UN-Women to fully support the implementation of norms and standards. They included the lack of political will of national Governments and/or individual ministries, limited government capacities to implement norms and standards, and cultural resistance to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

UN-Women has faced challenges regarding the broadness of its impact areas, as well as insufficient linkages between its headquarters and field offices and its activities in support of norm development and implementation

44. Additional factors have made it challenging for UN-Women to support the implementation of normative gains that it helped to achieve. First, the six impact areas of the UN-Women strategic plan covered a very wide range of development results to which UN-Women planned to contribute, thus making it difficult to develop specific strategies and tools for operationalizing the outcomes established in the plan. This challenge was also stated in the review by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, which expressed concern that UN-Women did not provide explicit theories of change for its impact areas that explained how outputs were intended to contribute to the outcomes identified in the development results framework.[18] The UN-Women humanitarian strategy for 2014-2017 is a good example of a clear document in which linkages between normative, operational and coordination activities are explicitly discussed.

45. Second, insufficient linkages between UN-Women headquarters and field offices have hampered the implementation of normative gains. Those weak linkages were one of the three main obstacles volunteered by staff surveyed when asked about challenges in implementing their normative support mandate, and fewer than half of UN-Women staff survey respondents (48 per cent) rated UN-Women effective at coordinating headquarters and field offices in supporting the adoption and implementation of norms and standards. Furthermore, until 2014, UN-Women regional offices had not been represented in the UN-Women senior management team, which was composed entirely of headquarters staff. UN-Women headquarters thus did not obtain the full benefits of the regional perspective in its deliberations and decisions, and the regional offices were not completely aware of considerations that led to headquarters decisions. The extended senior management team, which now includes the regional directors, is, however, scheduled to meet only 2-3 times a year. This seems insufficient to foster more regular and systematic working

[18] Draft synthesis report of the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network on UN-Women, October 2014. UN-Women agreed in part with this assessment.

relationships between regional directors and senior management colleagues at headquarters.

46. Insufficient headquarters/field linkages were also exemplified by the need for more specific and regular guidance to field offices. While the headquarters communicates with the field regarding significant normative decisions of intergovernmental meetings, such as the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and has developed some guidance notes on particular norms and standards, specific and practical advice on how to translate those decisions in the field was not regularly provided. Many UN-Women field staff surveyed (43 per cent) and interviewed (20 per cent) volunteered that they received insufficient support from headquarters with regard to substantive guidance for supporting the implementation of norms and standards.

47. Third, the implementation of norms and standards was hindered by inadequate integration between the Entity's normative development and implementation activities. The UN-Women Programme and Operations Manual broadly refers to the need to develop country programmes within the normative framework and acknowledges the need to align those programmes with national priorities: country strategic notes refer to internationally agreed norms and standards (for example, 10 of 13 notes reviewed discussed how to implement conclusions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women). However, there is no analysis or guidance linking the different norms by strategic issues; nor are there wider organizational policies on how to interpret and implement those norms. Of the 25 UN-Women headquarters staff interviewed, 4 volunteered that UN-Women should better articulate how operational results had been achieved owing to its normative support work, and it was one of the main recommendations made to strengthen UN-Women. The evaluation by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network identified the linking of the Entity's policy dialogue and normative support roles at the global level with lessons learned and operations at the regional and country levels as a major challenge, and noted that systems for the dissemination of internal knowledge and communication of lessons learned between headquarters and country offices required improvement. It reported the difficulty in seeing a clear link between UN-Women activities and outputs and the ensuing difficulty in assessing the Entity's contributions to development results.

48. The Entity's structure also limited the optimal integration of its normative development and implementation activities. While coordination between the subprogrammes worked very well for key events, such as the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, it had not yet been fully translated into more regular day-to-day interaction. Twenty-eight per cent of UN-Women headquarters staff interviewed indicated that there was limited dialogue between and within the two subprogrammes and poor coordination between the divisions at headquarters. Following the first UN-Women staff survey in 2014, the Executive Director established a working group on internal communications to optimize communication between headquarters divisions and at the regional and country levels.

D. UN-Women has not yet fully leveraged its United Nations partnerships in order to more effectively support the implementation of the normative framework

UN-Women has effectively led and guided coordination mechanisms at the headquarters level

49. In order to effectively support the development and implementation of the normative framework, UN-Women must effectively coordinate with its United Nations partners. It has had some success in this regard, even though the coordination mandate was added only when UN-Women was created. A majority of UN-Women staff surveyed (55 per cent) rated coordination between UN-Women and other United Nations entities as very effective or effective, and two thirds rated UN-Women very effective or effective in promoting the integration of gender issues into the work programmes of other United Nations entities. In addition to the normative gains discussed in result B, UN-Women has, for example, spearheaded the United Nations system-wide action plan for the implementation of United Nations policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women, which has enhanced the United Nations system's ability to hold itself accountable. The Entity's technical support included the coordination of 13 inter-agency workshops with the participation of between 12 and 31 entities from 2012 to 2014. The introduction of this accountability system was repeatedly cited in interviews as having significantly contributed to progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the United Nations system.

50. At the global level, UN-Women has participated in several coordination mechanisms. It chaired and provided substantive servicing to the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and the task team on gender equality of the United Nations Development Group. Since the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, UN-Women has used the Network to exchange experiences and prepare a joint United Nations position statement for the priority theme of the Commission, and the average rating of Network participants at the 2013 meeting regarding the extent to which the specific objectives of the annual session were addressed was 4.5 out of 6. UN-Women has used its United Nations partnerships to support and monitor the implementation of key intergovernmental resolutions, such as the section on gender in the resolution on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

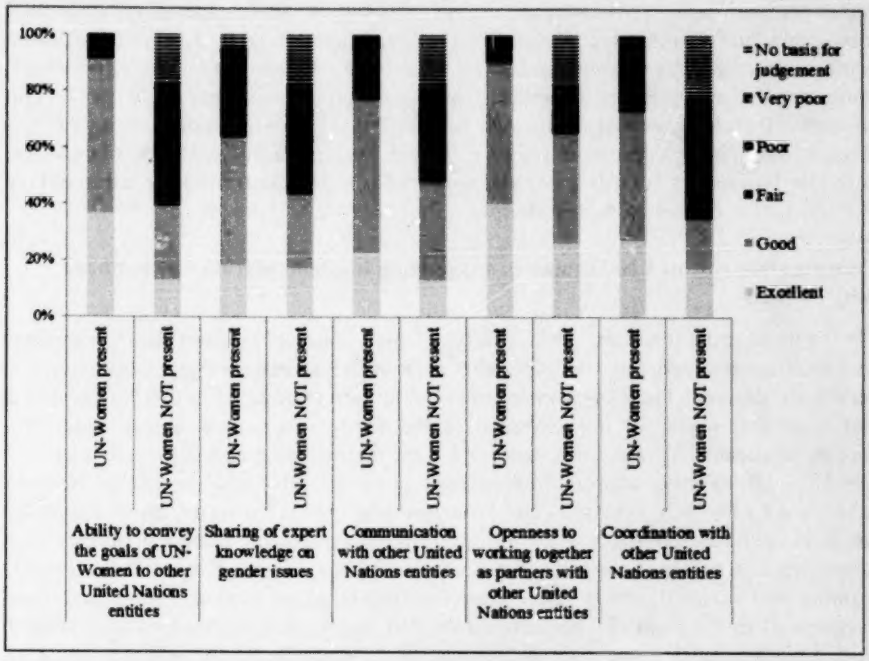
51. On the other hand, UN-Women has not always used coordination mechanisms to their fullest potential for promoting the implementation of the normative framework. The Network meets in plenary before the session of the Commission on the Status of Women and holds one or two interim meetings throughout the year, not taking advantage of opportunities for more regular and systematic institutional follow-up to the Commission's commitments and recommendations. The Entity's United Nations partners noted that the extent to which commitments and recommendations were followed up depended on the grade of Network representatives: gender focal points were often at an insufficiently high level of authority or too junior to make decisions and commitments. Eight of nine Network members interviewed volunteered that the Network could be used more effectively for policy discussions and strategy development to support the implementation of the Commission's agreed conclusions.

UN-Women has been more effective in working within United Nations country teams where it has a country presence

52. At the country level, UN-Women has contributed to increasing synergies and coherence within the United Nations country team that support implementation of the normative framework, including through its regional offices in countries where it has no field presence. It chaired or co-chaired 91 United Nations gender theme groups supporting the work of resident coordinators and country teams. Nearly two thirds (62 per cent) of United Nations partners interviewed in the field indicated that UN-Women played an important advocacy and coordination role within the United Nations country team, with particular focus on ending violence against women (all UN-Women country workplans reviewed presented a multisectoral approach) and reporting against normative frameworks, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. For example, the UN-Women office in India played an important leadership role in the United Nations support to the Government after the highly publicized gang rape in Delhi in 2012. Joint programming with UN-Women was referenced in 40 per cent of the resident coordinator reports reviewed, and 8 of 11 United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks reviewed included gender-specific outcomes.

53. The Entity's United Nations partnerships around its normative support work have been stronger in those countries where it has a presence, as shown in figure V. Resident coordinators in countries with a UN-Women presence consistently rated it more positively on its participation in the United Nations country team than resident coordinators in countries where it was not present. UN-Women has also been more effective in mainstreaming gender into the work of the country team when it has a country presence: a majority of resident coordinator survey respondents (73 per cent) for the former rated UN-Women very effective or effective in this regard, compared with less than half (43 per cent) for the latter.

Figure V
Resident coordinator ratings of UN-Women participation in United Nations country teams



Source: OIOS surveys.

UN-Women has not fully leveraged its United Nations partnerships to support the implementation of norms and standards, although some tools and mechanisms have been effective

54. UN-Women has not adequately capitalized on its United Nations partnerships to fully leverage the comparative advantages of other entities with a greater field presence in order to better support the implementation of normative gains. For example, at the country level, UN-Women has traditionally worked primarily with the Ministry of Women. While it has worked with other sectoral ministries in some countries, it has not always fully utilized the wider networks and broader agendas of other United Nations agencies in order to further reach out to those ministries. In addition, 13 of 26 United Nations partners interviewed in the field suggested that UN-Women should provide advice to other United Nations partners on integrating gender equality and the empowerment of women into their work, rather than being involved in direct project implementation.

55. During its own field missions, OIOS observed examples of UN-Women effectively leveraging its United Nations partnerships, as well as opportunities for doing it more. These included, as a positive example, working with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS on the adoption of a national law on HIV and, as an example of an unexploited opportunity, not partnering with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for greater access to the Ministry of Education to advance gender-specific norms around education.

56. Strategic partnership agreements recognizing the respective mandates of UN-Women and its United Nations partners have facilitated the Entity's better leveraging of those partnerships to support the implementation of norms and standards and have provided an overall framework for cooperation, enhanced interaction and information sharing.[19] However, according to five of six United Nations partners interviewed and with whom UN-Women had such agreements, those agreements need to be updated and better integrated into field work. The absence of such agreements can lead to inefficiency; for example, on one OIOS mission the country representative of a United Nations entity stated that confusion with UN-Women on definitions of and approaches to human trafficking led to delays in important anti-trafficking legislation.

Coordination role of UN-Women in supporting implementation has not been fully defined

57. Within this context, the Entity's roles and responsibilities regarding coordination in supporting the implementation of the normative framework have not been fully defined. The UN-Women meta-evaluation conducted in 2012 determined that there was room for improvement in the Entity's coordination and noted the absence of identifying and understanding United Nations partner complementarities.[20] The 2014 UN-Women coordination strategy is intended to enhance United Nations coherence by creating synergies and strengthening collective action on its mandate, but it is acknowledged that there is opportunity for greater complementarity and coherence and evidence suggests that obstacles and challenges remain at the global, regional and national levels. More than one fourth of government representatives interviewed in the field (27 per cent) indicated that United Nations entities should work together more closely on achieving gender-specific goals, and one third of United Nations partners interviewed in the field suggested that UN-Women should more clearly articulate its core business. Many United Nations partners interviewed at headquarters (40 per cent) stated that UN-Women needed to clarify its coordination role; one fourth of UN-Women headquarters staff interviewed volunteered the same. Furthermore, close to one fifth of resident coordinators surveyed (17 per cent) volunteered "insufficient coordination" and "overlapping and unclear mandates" with other United Nations entities as one of the biggest challenges that UN-Women faced in mainstreaming norms and standards into the work of their country teams. The assessment by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network noted UN-Women staff as being uncertain about how to operationalize coordination of the mandate. In this context, discussions with United Nations partners, such as the one organized by the UN-Women regional office for Asia and the Pacific in 2014 on the implications of its coordination role within the United Nations system, helped to define roles in those impact areas of the Entity's strategic framework for which it had a responsibility to trigger a United Nations response but did not have the technical capacity to implement projects.

58. Other factors may account for limitations in the Entity's capacity to fully leverage its coordination role to support the implementation of the normative framework. Forty-two per cent of United Nations partners interviewed at

[19] For example, with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Labour Organization.

[20] UN-Women meta-evaluation (2012). The assessment occurred while UN-Women was still quite new.

headquarters volunteered that UN-Women had limited resources, particularly within the context of its large mandate. In addition, UN-Women cannot be held accountable for the priority given to gender equality and the empowerment of women by other United Nations entities or for their willingness to cooperate with UN-Women in this regard, and the normative framework does not always clearly define or imply the Entity's role in supporting its implementation.

V. Conclusion

59. Four years after its creation, UN-Women stands at a critical juncture for making an even greater impact in the lives of women. Since 2011, it has made significant strides in advancing the global normative agenda for women's rights. For this, it is to be commended. Throughout the conduct of the evaluation, UN-Women was consistently acknowledged as effectively advocating and championing the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Its unique added value is its singular focus on that subject and the authority that it brings to the discourse on women's human rights.

60. UN-Women needs to capitalize on the impressive gains that it has achieved in its normative support work and transform them into even greater results on the ground. It is important to acknowledge the very real challenges that UN-Women faces in moving forward, including cultural resistance, limited resources, competing demands and still-evolving organizational roles. If UN-Women is to make a difference, it needs to more strategically focus on a few critical issues that can have a significant impact and systematically implement activities to address those. UN-Women also needs to gain greater synergies from its normative and operational work. It needs to improve how it communicates about the important work that it does and about how gender equality is vital to the achievement of the larger goals of the United Nations.

61. At the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, Member States recognized the confluence of key intergovernmental processes in 2015, including the target date for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda, the 20-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 15-year review of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and climate change work, as a critical opportunity for enhancing efforts to accelerate the achievement of the goals of gender equality and empowerment of women. The year 2015 thus marks a great opportunity for UN-Women to make an even greater impact.

62. At the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in 2014, it was recognized that not a single country had achieved full equality for women. With a stand-alone gender equality goal and with gender perspectives mainstreamed throughout its framework, the post-2015 development agenda provides a strong context for furthering the work and results around gender equality. As stated by the Executive Director in her address to the Third Committee in October 2014, UN-Women must now focus on closing the gap between commitments and action and between words and deeds.

VI. Recommendations

63. OIOS makes the following four important recommendations to UN-Women:

Recommendation 1 (result C)

64. **In the context of the midterm review of its strategic plan in 2016, UN-Women should define how it will address key issues within its six impact areas.** Specifically, UN-Women should develop theories of change which represent a visual road map conveying what UN-Women aims to achieve and how it intends to achieve it at the global, regional and country levels.

Indicator of achievement: description of how key issues will be addressed, with accompanying theories of change

Recommendation 2 (result C)

65. **UN-Women should further enhance the synergies between its two subprogrammes by making linkages between them more systematic, regular and, where appropriate, formal.** This should build upon good practices and lessons learned from existing mechanisms in order to further strengthen communication and coordination between subprogrammes 1 and 2 in all phases of normative support work.

Indicator of achievement: more systematic and regular linkages between the two subprogrammes

Recommendation 3 (result C)

66. **UN-Women should further strengthen the existing linkages between its headquarters and field offices, including enhanced support to field offices in the implementation of the framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women,** including by:

(a) Ensuring the participation of regional directors in senior management team meetings where the topic(s) discussed would benefit from their direct input, and regularly sharing minutes or summaries of all such meetings with regional directors;

(b) Enhancing the terms of reference of thematic advisers in the regional offices to provide more guidance to country offices on strategies and tools for implementing the normative framework, including how to use theories of change at the country level for the implementation of that framework;

(c) Organizing regular regional meetings of UN-Women country representatives to share experiences in the implementation of norms and standards and draw lessons learned with a view to better informing normative support work at all levels.

Indicators of achievement:

- Inclusion of regional directors in relevant senior management team meetings and sharing of minutes or summaries
- Enhanced terms of reference of thematic advisers

- Regular UN-Women country representative meetings organized at the regional level

Recommendation 4 (result D)

67. **UN-Women should, in consultation with its United Nations partners, further clarify complementarities with regard to implementing the normative framework.** Building upon existing tools, UN-Women should identify specific ways in which it can best utilize the comparative advantage of its partners to strengthen implementation of the normative framework.

Indicator of achievement: clearer complementarities between UN-Women and its United Nations partners

(*Signed*) Carman L. **Lapointe**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

Annex

Formal response of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to the evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services[a]

18 March 2015

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) would like to express its appreciation to the Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) for conducting this important exercise, which should help UN-Women to further consolidate the linkages between its normative and operational work.

UN-Women will make use of the findings and recommendations of this evaluation, including in the context of the midterm review of its current strategic plan, which will take place in 2016.

Following the submission of the final report, UN-Women reached out to OIOS on a number of aspects of the report, including through a set of comments to help to make the evaluation fully accurate and adequately reflect the balance between achievements and pending challenges faced by the Entity.

UN-Women is grateful to OIOS for that constructive dialogue.

From the outset, UN-Women would like to highlight that strengthening the linkages between normative and operational work is constrained by the persistent significant underfunding of the Entity.

UN-Women appreciates the acumen of the evaluation in pointing to resources as a key issue in relation to ensuring strong normative and operational linkages. Some of the recommendations contained in the report are not resource neutral, and the Entity's ability to fully comply with them depends, at least in part, on the future increase of available resources. Especially at the field level, integrating normative standards is often more resource-intensive, as it may require investments in building or strengthening national capacity, and working with a number of national partners and institutions.

UN-Women also appreciated the readiness of the evaluators to provide explanations on methodological issues and related limitations.

Consolidating and further enhancing linkages between the headquarters and the field is a priority for UN-Women.

UN-Women agrees with the evaluation on the key role of organizational structures and arrangements in ensuring effective linkages between normative standards and operations. In this regard, the regional architecture and the framework for delegation of authority could have benefited from deeper attention and analysis in the report.

[a] In the present annex, OIOS presents the full text of the comments received from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). This practice has been instituted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.

The 2014 reporting process for field offices has raised the bar considerably in terms of how the organization systematically tracks the links between normative and operational work, in particular how support to the implementation of norms and standards is provided at the field level. This includes the finalization and roll-out of a new results management system for the organization. The new system provides high-quality information which helps in appreciating how field-level structures (regional, multi-country and country offices) work to translate normative frameworks at the country level in line with institutional guidance.

In the report, it is recognized that UN-Women has contributed to the increased visibility and awareness of gender issues in the global policy arena. This success is due to its investment in substantive and technical expertise, knowledge bases, sustained advocacy efforts, extensive alliance and partnership building and proactive outreach efforts among all stakeholders, which, in turn, led to more systematic global attention to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

UN-Women has focused its efforts on promoting multi-stakeholder consensus building, advocacy and constituency building, as well as mobilizing new partnerships with key stakeholders, particularly member States and civil society.

There are several examples that demonstrate a synergistic approach. The fifty-seventh to fifty-ninth sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women were based on the Entity's substantive preparations, technical support and proactive engagement in advocacy and alliance building, globally and at the regional and country levels. This would not have been possible without effective internal communication, coordination and collaboration. Without undermining further scope for improvement, UN-Women is of the view that collaboration and coordination between headquarters and the field is, overall, effective and robust.

Under the leadership of its Programme Division, for example, the peer review group for strategic notes and annual workplans formulation brings together all divisions to provide quality assurance and support to planning processes in regional, multi-country and country offices, including on how to ensure appropriate normative-operational linkages.

The report mentions the Entity's role in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review as an example of global-level engagement. While the review is indeed negotiated globally, it focuses on the United Nations system's country-level operations for development. UN-Women supported member State negotiations and is actively involved in monitoring its implementation jointly with other United Nations entities. According to the latest report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, gender was rated at the top of the list among the areas where United Nations support was considered most significant by programme countries. This aspect is of direct relevance to the Entity's inter-agency and system-wide role and to this evaluation.

UN-Women also supports the Economic and Social Council in the area of gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system, including through the annual report of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes within the United Nations system.

UN-Women chairs or co-chairs more than 90 gender theme Groups, stretching its United Nations coordination functions across its country-level presence,

including through the work of its six regional offices, which are all equipped with a full-time planning and coordination specialist.

UN-Women notes that the corporate strategy on the implementation of its system-wide and inter-agency coordination mandates is central to strengthening its overall direction and capacity to fully capitalize on partnerships with United Nations organizations.

Response of UN-Women to the recommendations of OIOS

UN-Women agrees with **recommendation 1**.

The midterm review of the UN-Women strategic plan, 2014-2017, will reflect agreements on the new development agenda and the outcomes of the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The midterm review will also present an overview of major results achieved, as well as those from across evaluations, including this one. An internal reference group will be established to ensure engagement and involvement across the organization (including the field offices) in the review process. The midterm review will also benefit from and be informed by the discussions and deliberations on the United Nations fitness-for-purpose and the Economic and Social Council dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system.

In addition, the midterm review will greatly benefit from the new results management system that UN-Women developed and rolled out for the preparation of its annual report on the implementation of the strategic plan. The new reporting process and system for field offices has considerably enhanced the capacity of the organization to systematically track the links between normative and operational work, in particular how norms and standards are pursued and implemented at the field level.

As part of the midterm review process, UN-Women will review and analyse performance information from the system and from other sources, such as evaluations, to rigorously interrogate the implicit theory of change that is reflected primarily in the development results framework of the strategic plan and to support the development of a more explicit theory and strategy in relation to the organization's main areas of focus.

UN-Women agrees with **recommendation 2**.

Every organization makes decisions with regard to how to structure itself and its programmes internally to deliver on its mandate, and every organization subsequently strives to strike a balance between clear lines of accountability and maximizing collaborative and cross-divisional effectiveness. UN-Women is like other organizations in this regard and has worked consciously and consistently since its foundation to maximize the potential of its mandate and staff members and to build synergies across its programmes.

To that end, it is noted that several action have already been taken or are currently under way to address this recommendation. For example, a working group on the post-2015 development agenda and financing for development has been coordinating internal work and strategizing engagement with external partners (including member States, United Nations entities and civil society). The working

group specifically brings together all relevant divisions in both subprogrammes at headquarters, as well as all regional offices.

In addition, preparations for major initiatives, such as the annual session of the Commission on the Status of Women, are undertaken through a number of formal cross-divisional working groups, including a Steering Committee bringing together all divisions in both subprogrammes.

UN-Women has also taken steps to formalize the planning process for senior management team meetings, including maintaining proper records and sharing key outcomes with all staff, including through town hall meetings and communication to all staff.

It should also be noted that the two Assistant Secretaries-General heading each subprogramme continuously work with divisions in the other subprogramme, including through formal meetings with division directors and staff. The Entity will work to further enhance linkages between the Policy and the Intergovernmental Support Divisions, as well as between the United Nations System Coordination and the Programme Divisions, which are in separate subprogrammes.

UN-Women agrees with **recommendation 3**.

As an organization with a growing field presence and a commitment to supporting countries to implement the gender equality framework, UN-Women works diligently to maintain strong links between its field offices and headquarters but recognizes that every opportunity for improving both vertical and horizontal linkages within the organization should be exploited. The implementation of the regional architecture (endorsed by the Executive Board in 2012 and rolled out in 2013) is critical in that regard and will continue to be regularly monitored to ensure effective empowerment of field structures and strong linkages between country offices, regional offices and headquarters.

In addition, the oversight and quality assurance system has been strengthened to ensure support to field offices in the implementation of the framework. This is most evident through the establishment of a peer review group comprising the directors of every headquarters division, which meets with regional office and country office staff to work on the formulation of programmes and plans, including on ensuring strong and strategic links between the normative and operational dimensions of the organization's work at every level. Within the context of the regional architecture and strengthened systematic dialogue between field offices and headquarters on plans and programmes, UN-Women agrees that the specific measures under recommendation 3 (a), (b) and (c) will be considered part of a broader effort to ensure stronger linkages between headquarters and field offices, including on normative developments, which UN-Women is pursuing.

In addition, the quality assurance system has been strengthened to ensure support to field offices in the implementation of the framework. The peer review group for the formulation of strategic notes and annual workplans, which brings together all divisions from both subprogrammes to support the planning of regional and country offices, including of the normative-operational linkage.

In 2014, UN-Women created an extended management team that brings together divisional directors, section chiefs, thematic heads and regional directors. UN-Women is in the process of enhancing the working methods of the extended

management team and refining its purpose, with the objective, inter alia, of strengthening linkages between headquarters and field offices.

UN-Women would also note that the Director of the Programme Division, which directly supervises the work of regional directors, sits on the senior management team and has the primary responsibility to ensure that relevant agenda items and outcomes of senior management team meetings are discussed and shared with regional directors as appropriate. Nevertheless, UN-Women agrees that the direct participation of regional directors to relevant senior management team meetings will be beneficial to further enhancing coherence and communication flows.

UN-Women agrees with **recommendation 4**.

The Entity notes that the revised recommendation is more consistent with the current discourse on a United Nations fit for purpose, which suggests a fundamental departure from interventions that are based mainly on rigid divisions of labour towards a much more integrated way of working with other United Nations partners, building on horizontal coherence, integration, synergies and collaborative approaches. UN-Women will work consistently with this forward-looking fundamental shift.

UN-Women recognizes that further strengthening its partnerships with other United Nations agencies is critical. Subject to the availability of resources, the Entity will increase its capacity to leverage the United Nations system and support the strengthening of its gender equality work based on the needs identified from the results of the implementation of the United Nations system-wide action plan for the implementation of United Nations policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN-Women will also execute the updated strategy for implementing its system-wide and inter-agency mandates for gender equality and the empowerment of women, which will also be complemented by an underlying theory of change further articulating the various elements of its United Nations coordination mandate.

UN-Women is currently undergoing a corporate formative evaluation of the first four years of implementation of its system-wide and inter-agency mandates. That exercise will provide additional elements of lessons learned for the Entity's coordination role, including as regards complementarities with other United Nations partners.

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Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Coordination questions: New Partnership for Africa's Development

United Nations system support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report presents an overview of activities undertaken by the United Nations system in support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) since June 2014. It is organized around the nine clusters of the Regional Coordination Mechanism of the United Nations agencies working in Africa.

During the review period, the United Nations system continued to strengthen its support in respect of the implementation of the NEPAD and African Union strategic plans for the period 2014-2017, notably in the context of the Year of Agriculture and Food Security in Africa and Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063 proclaimed by the African Union, as well as infrastructure. The United Nations system strongly supported the African Union and subregional institutions in the fight against Ebola. Following the adoption of Agenda 2063 by the African Union at the twenty-fourth ordinary session of its Assembly, in January 2015, the United Nations has been working to refocus its partnership with the African Union and strengthen the Regional Coordination Mechanism in order to support the Strategic Plan 2014-2017 of the African Union Commission and the 10-Year Implementation Plan for Agenda 2063.

* E/AC.51/2015/1.

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I. Introduction

1. At its forty-fifth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to report to the Committee at its forty-sixth session, and annually thereafter, on the support provided by the United Nations system to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The request was endorsed by the Assembly in its resolution 69/17.

II. Support for the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development

2. The present report highlights activities implemented by the United Nations system in support of NEPAD since June 2014, organized around nine thematic clusters corresponding to the priorities of NEPAD and co-chaired by United Nations entities and the African Union Commission. It was prepared on the basis of inputs received from the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and the departments of the Secretariat in response to the request by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa for contributions regarding key activities, programmes and projects implemented in the period 2014-2015, highlighting results and impact in both qualitative and quantitative terms.

3. The report benefited from the first report of the United Nations monitoring mechanism on the review of the implementation of the commitments made towards Africa's development (A/69/163), which reviewed four areas: (a) agriculture, food security and nutrition; (b) financing for development; (c) environmental sustainability and climate change; and (d) governance.

A. Infrastructure development

4. The infrastructure cluster co-coordinated by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) comprises four subclusters: energy, information and communications technology, transport, and water and sanitation.

5. During the review period, cluster members continued to support the implementation of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa. In June 2014, ECA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB) partnered with the NEPAD Agency and Senegal to co-organize the Dakar Financing Summit for Africa's Infrastructure Development. Through the adoption of the Dakar Agenda for Action, the Summit made it possible to garner support and foster partnerships, including public-private partnerships, to accelerate the implementation of 16 Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa priority projects.

6. As a follow-up to the Dakar Financing Summit, ECA designed Project 16-16-16, a plan that focuses on supporting the implementation of the 16 priority projects by 2016. As part of Africa Week 2014, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the United Nations Global Compact and the NEPAD Agency organized a business forum for the identification of public-private partnerships to accelerate the implementation of the top eight projects emerging from the Dakar Financing

Summit. As a result, the United Nations Global Compact has been working through the Principles for Responsible Investment to raise awareness on these projects and engage more institutional investors in inclusive investment in infrastructure in Africa. Furthermore, the World Bank committed over $4 billion in support to the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa priorities in energy, transport, information and communications technology and water.

7. In the energy sector, within the Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All Initiative, the World Bank supported countries in identifying investment requirements through 2030 to meet access goals. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has been implementing a $3.35 million project, financed by the Global Environment Facility, to promote micro-hydropower capacity in the rural areas of the United Republic of Tanzania: a hydropower plant with a capacity of 10 kW was constructed in Lushoto District, expanding the electricity network to more than 80 households and generating local employment.

8. In the area of information and communications technology, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) continued to support the operationalization of the Connect Africa Initiative, in particular with respect to the broadband development of the Uhurunet submarine cable and the Umojanet terrestrial network, the two segments of the NEPAD Information and Communications Technology Broadband Infrastructure Network. ITU has led the harmonization of regional and subregional information and communications technology policies and regulatory frameworks by creating the necessary environment for public and private investments in information and communications technology infrastructure in the continent. In West Africa, ITU continued to support countries to transpose the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) model laws into their national legal instruments.

9. In the transport sector, cluster members supported the preparation of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Africa Highways Network endorsed by the African Union at the twenty-third ordinary session of its Assembly, in June 2014, to promote continental integration. The World Bank has been supporting 10 corridor projects worth $2.7 billion, including new projects aimed at expanding the economic impact of corridors through integrated and intermodal corridor development. These projects will enhance trade and market access in Africa. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has been assisting 29 African States in resolving identified safety deficiencies. As a result, progress has been achieved in enhancing aviation safety in Africa.

10. To address water resource management in the Sahel region, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), through a project covering five major aquifer systems shared by 13 African countries, developed a database for shared aquifer diagnostic analysis and a strategic action plan to be used for training and management and water balance modelling.

B. Governance

11. The governance cluster, co-coordinated by UNDP, comprises four subclusters, namely: democracy and governance, economic and corporate governance, human rights, and public service and administration.

12. During the review period, the United Nations Democracy Fund continued to strengthen democracy and civil society organizations, notably through 13 projects worth $2.3 million. The Democracy Fund strengthened grass-roots citizen participation in the implementation of decentralization in Cameroon, supported youth empowerment for participation in local governance in Malawi, strengthened young women's civic participation and leadership in Uganda, amplified youth voices in Zimbabwe and improved public policy participation and accountability in Somalia.

13. In the past 12 months, the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) collaborated with ECOWAS on preparations for various elections in the subregion, including in Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria and Togo. In November 2014, UNOWA conducted a mission to Burkina Faso with the African Union and ECOWAS, which supported inclusive dialogue by national stakeholders following the popular uprising in the country. The African Union, United Nations and ECOWAS supported the establishment of the International Follow-up and Support Group for the Transition in Burkina Faso to promote a smooth transition in the country that will lead to elections in October 2015.

14. The Peacebuilding Support Office strengthened its support to the stabilization of countries by raising the ceiling of the Immediate Response Facility to $15 million per country. In the Central African Republic, this support benefited transitional authorities, who used the funding to safeguard core Government services, including the payment of $4.5 million in police and gendarmerie salaries, paralleling the World Bank's payment of salaries for the remainder of the civil service. The Office also supported the voluntary relocation of ex-Séléka combatants from camps in Bangui to their communities of origin. In early 2015, the Office assisted in the organization of the Bangui forum for reconciliation and political dialogue. As a result, public confidence in the transition was enhanced in the country.

15. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) assisted countries in combating illicit trafficking under the framework of the Airport Communication Project and the Global Container Control Programme, both of which were implemented jointly with the World Customs Organization. Joint airport interdiction task forces were installed at priority international airports in Benin, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo, where they have been instrumental in conducting drug seizures.

16. UNODC continued to support Governments in North Africa in their reform processes, particularly in the area of good governance and the rule of law. Since April 2014, in close cooperation with Tunisia, UNODC has continued to implement activities to support criminal justice reform and strengthen the rule of law. UNODC also provided assistance to national authorities in Egypt to establish effective mechanisms to combat money-laundering and facilitate asset recovery. It continued to strengthen the capacity of criminal justice institutions in the Horn of Africa and Indian Ocean region to effectively counter piracy and wider maritime crime. UNODC provided a wide array of support to piracy prosecutions in Kenya, Mauritius, Seychelles and the United Republic of Tanzania aimed at ensuring fair and efficient trials and secure, humane detention.

17. On economic governance, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) continued to help African countries to achieve macroeconomic and financial stability by building capacities through training courses and providing financial support through a range

of financing facilities, including the Extended Credit Facility, the Standby Credit Facility, the Rapid Credit Facility and debt relief. As at August 2014, 29 African countries had received irrevocable debt relief equivalent to over $6.5 billion from IMF. The Fund also established the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust in February 2015, from which Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone received $100 million grants for debt relief.

18. To improve the governance of extractive industries, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, together with ECA, UNIDO, the African Union and AfDB, organized a high-level meeting on the theme "Towards the post-2015 development agenda and the African Union Agenda 2063: Enhancing the management of Africa's extractive industries to promote sustainable and inclusive industrial development, structural economic transformation and inclusive and resilient economic growth". The purpose of the event was to strengthen the capacity of African countries to improve the management of natural resources through the implementation of the African Mining Vision, the Action Plan for Accelerated Industrial Development in Africa and the Common African Position on the post-2015 development agenda.

19. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) continued to help 16 African countries[1] in simplifying and automating their rules and procedures relating to investment and entrepreneurship. UNCTAD and UNDP assisted Cameroon in installing the e-regulations system in two more regions, thereby ensuring that simplification measures implemented in the capital also benefit entrepreneurs elsewhere in the country. Both organizations also assisted the Investment Promotion Agency of the United Republic of Tanzania in installing an online registration system, which improved the business climate by reducing the number of administrative steps required to start a business from 21 to just 7.

20. Through its programme for building African capacity for trade, the International Trade Centre (ITC) provided technical expertise to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Business Council to strengthen its capacity for improved dialogue with government with a view to ensuring that the private sector's concerns are taken into consideration in policy formulation and trade negotiations.

21. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) collaborated with the African Union, regional economic communities and other United Nations entities to provide protection and assistance to 13 million refugees, internally displaced and Stateless persons in Africa. UNHCR, ECA, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Somali diaspora and the wider international community supported a ministerial meeting in August 2014 at which the Addis Ababa Commitment towards Somali Refugees was adopted, marking a milestone in bringing together the Governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda and Yemen to address the humanitarian and development aspects required for sustainable solutions for Somali refugees.

22. The joint efforts of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNDP and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in respect of stigma, discrimination and other human rights violations against people

[1] Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo and United Republic of Tanzania.

living with HIV in Africa led to the adoption of a resolution on involuntary sterilization and the protection of human rights in access to HIV services.

23. In West Africa, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), together with AfDB and ECOWAS, developed a regional policy to promote human rights education, education for citizenship and a culture of peace, and education on democracy and its integration in the education systems. In Central Africa, regional guiding principles for education for peace and citizenship were finalized by UNESCO for integration into sector plans and curriculums. In Eastern Africa, several initiatives in the framework of the Global Citizenship Education initiative were developed in Kenya and South Sudan. In Southern Africa, UNESCO continued to reinforce tolerance, combating xenophobia and promoting peaceful coexistence through community radio programmes and a media campaign on gender-based violence and human rights.

C. Peace and security

24. The peace and security cluster, co-chaired by the United Nations Office to the African Union, on behalf of the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, comprises four subclusters: the African Peace and Security Architecture, post-conflict reconstruction and development, emergency preparedness and response, and transitional justice.

25. As part of its efforts to enhance subregional capacities for conflict prevention and mediation, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), with the support of the Mediation Support Standby Team, organized a mediation training workshop for the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in November 2014. It also engaged with ECCAS to set up a mediation unit and create a roster of mediation experts at the ECCAS secretariat in Gabon. UNOCA contributed to enhancing ECCAS mediation capacity and supporting the operationalization of a mediation architecture.

26. UNOCA was instrumental in bringing the anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka elements back to the negotiating table and facilitating the signing of an agreement on the cessation of hostilities between the parties, during the forum for national reconciliation and political dialogue held in the Republic of the Congo in July 2014. Since then, UNOCA has continued to support leaders in the subregion and Central African stakeholders, in close consultation with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), to facilitate the implementation of the Brazzaville Agreement, and to support them in providing advice to all parties on the next steps of the political process.

27. Similarly, the Department of Political Affairs supported the Mano River Union in the development and subsequent launch of the implementation of the cross-border security strategy in the subregion, including the development of a five-year project, which was adopted by member States of the Mano River Union in Côte d'Ivoire in July 2014. In response to the expansion of Boko Haram activities in the Lake Chad Basin region, UNOWA and UNOCA provided technical support to subregional institutions and the member States affected. In this regard, UNOWA supported the Lake Chad Basin Commission for the development of a comprehensive regional counter-terrorism strategy. UNOWA and UNOCA conducted missions to Chad,

Cameroon and the Niger to assess the impact of Boko Haram and explore ways in which the United Nations could support the affected Governments and the relevant subregional organizations. The Department of Political Affairs was also instrumental in finalizing the operationalization of the Multinational Task Force against Boko Haram in February 2015.

28. In October 2014, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the African Union and UNDP organized the briefing by regional economic communities to United Nations Member States on the role of Africa's regional economic communities in consolidating peace, security, governance and development in the context of Agenda 2063. While underscoring the fundamental implementing role of the regional economic communities, the event contributed to raising awareness on the need for United Nations-enhanced support in strengthening the technical and institutional capacities of the regional economic communities, including for reviewing their respective strategic plans to ensure their alignment with Agenda 2063 and monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Agenda at the regional level.

29. Over the review period, the Peacebuilding Fund supported efforts towards consolidating peace in Burundi, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Sierra Leone and Uganda. These countries received a combined total of $65.2 million. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Peacebuilding Fund helped in catalysing the revised International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy in the eastern part of the country by emphasizing political dialogue and providing for a multisectoral, area-based approach through two projects in South Kivu Province and Province Orientale aimed at kick-starting the implementation of the revised strategy and securing longer-term stabilization.

30. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat supported the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) in developing a regional disaster-response capacity in Southern and Eastern Africa and a regional humanitarian-response capacity in Eastern Africa for IGAD member States. The Office continued to support United Nations-mandated missions in Africa through the delivery of humanitarian civil-military coordination training, in cooperation with the Integrated Mission Training Centre of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat and other partners. Training was provided to civilian and military mission personnel from the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan to enable improved cooperation and coordination.

31. The Department of Political Affairs pursued its collaboration with ECCAS and ECOWAS to support the development of a comprehensive regional anti-piracy strategy in response to the emerging threat posed by piracy. In support of the steering committee established by ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the Department contributed to the development of a 2014-2016 action plan in June 2014, the inauguration of the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Security in Cameroon in September 2014 and the operationalization in the Republic of the Congo of the Regional Coordination Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa in October 2014.

32. The International Maritime Organization (IMO), through its Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme, continued to support counter-piracy measures in

Somalia and the Gulf of Aden, including in the areas of training and capacity-building. Similar efforts are ongoing in the West and Central Africa regions for the Gulf of Guinea. Through combined efforts by all actors, the incidence of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the regions under reference has substantially declined.

33. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) supported several African municipalities in the areas of city crime prevention and urban safety intervention, yielding positive results. The replication of the safer cities model of a programme city in neighbouring cities has been particularly visible in the United Republic of Tanzania, where more than 15 cities have learned from the capital how to develop a safer cities strategy and how to help each other in the urban development space.

D. Agriculture, food security and rural development

34. The agriculture, food security and rural development cluster is co-coordinated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).The cluster helped to enhance the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and African Union activities within the context of the Year of Agriculture and Food Security in Africa proclaimed by the African Union, in line with the Maputo Declaration.

35. The World Food Programme (WFP), together with the African Union Commission and ECA, has continued to implement the Cost of Hunger in Africa Study. In this regard, WFP has played a key role in promoting a cross-continental partnership between Africa and Latin America in an effort to transfer knowledge and experiences from the Cost of Hunger methodology developed in the Latin American and Caribbean region to Africa. At the national level, the results served as the basis for the expansion of national programmes and the implementation of policy frameworks in nutrition. At the regional level, the results from Egypt, Ethiopia, Swaziland and Uganda have been showcased in regional ministerial conferences, demonstrating the economic cost of failing to address nutrition.

36. The World Bank continued to support the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme at the national and regional levels through the provision of $65.2 million to the Programme's multi-donor trust funds. The World Bank also facilitated the adoption of frameworks for developing and financing initiatives to mainstream climate-smart approaches into country-level plans, programmes and policies. Over the review period, the World Bank lending for agriculture, food security and rural development committed $1.5 billion in Africa, including $495 million for the transformation of irrigation management in Nigeria and $100 million for the transformation of the agriculture sector in Rwanda.

37. WFP has continued to support the third pillar of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, namely, increasing food supply and reducing hunger across the region, by raising smallholder productivity and improving responses to food emergencies. In November 2014, WFP joined other stakeholders in validating the Programme's implementation strategy and road map.

38. IAEA implemented 108 national and 14 regional projects in African States in 2014 to reduce poverty and combat food insecurity through the application of nuclear and isotopic techniques in the areas of the improvement of agricultural productivity, the creation of Tsetse-free zones, combating desertification and crop improvement. For instance, IAEA and FAO assisted the United Republic of Tanzania in using mutation breeding to produce a new variety of rice.

39. The International Labour Organization (ILO) collaborated with FAO to support the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme framework and rural futures initiatives in Zambia and Malawi. By strengthening the capacity of stakeholders to analyse and address youth and decent employment policy issues with a gender-sensitive and climate-smart perspective, the partners promoted policy, institutional and programme options to improve rural youth employment opportunities and access to markets. In 2014, through a project in Zambia, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) facilitated the identification, transfer, acquisition, adaptation and use of the appropriate technology to harvest rainwater for irrigation and solar energy for producing pure drinking water.

40. The Common Fund for Commodities continued to support smallholder producers and help to increase their productivity through horizontal and vertical diversification, value addition, increasing access to markets and capacity-building in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. In Uganda, the Fund supported a rural engine maize trading and processing company, which has allowed Ugandan producers to enhance their productive capacity by accessing a fully capitalized and integrated supply chain for dried agricultural and financial services provided by the company. In Ghana, the Common Fund for Commodities supported the StarShea Network, which currently has 5,000 women members, by enhancing capacities in quality processing, price communication, supervision of processing and coordination of loading bags for shipment. As a result, this social business model contributed to achieve sustainable improvements in the lives of primary producers of shea nuts.

41. UNIDO continued to support Nigeria in establishing staple crop processing zones. In 2014, six high-quality master plans were developed for the identified project sites. To date, $200 million has been mobilized from the World Bank for the development of sustainable institutions and infrastructure.

42. Against this background, with regard to the 6 per cent growth target for agricultural production set by the Maputo Declaration, 10 African countries have so far achieved or exceeded the target and four countries have achieved 5 to 6 per cent growth. Concerning budgetary allocations, 12 countries have reached or surpassed the 10 per cent budget allocation target, while 13 others are in the 5 to 10 per cent range (see A/69/163). The cluster contributed to bringing nutrition to the centre of the political and development agenda of African countries and advocated for the eradication of hunger and prevention of all forms of malnutrition on the continent through the review of the African Regional Nutrition Strategy 2015-2025.

E. Industry, trade and market access

43. The industry, trade and market access cluster, co-chaired by UNIDO, supported African regional and sub-regional organizations in building productive capacity for trade, market access and continent-wide sustainable industrialization.

44. UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat and African Export-Import Bank, has completed a project on promoting regional value chains in sub-Saharan Africa, which resulted in the identification of regional value chains for the leather and leather products industry to improve export competitiveness and domestic value addition and generate employment for low-skilled labour in many African countries.

45. ITC contributed to enhancing regional integration, trade development and export promotion by identifying sectors with high potential to increase intraregional trade. As a result, a regional leather strategy was developed in COMESA and targeted services were provided to small and medium-sized enterprises in the leather sector to reach new markets.

46. Together with other United Nations entities, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States supported Benin to organize a ministerial meeting on new partnerships for the development of productive capacities in least developed countries in Cotonou in July 2014. The meeting created political momentum in support of the least developed country development agenda, particularly in respect of productive capacity-building and all its dimensions.

47. The World Trade Organization (WTO) provided support to the specific needs of the nine acceding African countries. WTO reference centres — information points in developing and least developed countries where trade-related information can be accessed and information from WTO is disseminated to national stakeholders — were upgraded in 2014. Through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries, WTO and partners contributed to building institutional trade capacity in line with the rise in the number of Enhanced Integrated Framework tier 1 projects, which increased from 29 at the end of 2010 to 58 by early 2015. Similarly, tier 2 projects increased from 1 at the end of 2011 to 36, building up the trade-related and supply side capacity of African countries.

48. With the financial support of Sweden, UNCTAD assisted many African countries in preparing for the implementation of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation. UNCTAD, ITC and WTO, as well as regional organizations, including the East African Community and West African Economic and Monetary Union, conducted a gap analysis with regard to the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. This enabled countries to prepare formal notifications to the WTO secretariat.

49. In 2014, under the UNCTAD Automated System for Customs Data programme, numerous capacity-building training activities on the data system were organized for national customs administrations, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the system and allowing 26 African countries to increase customs revenues collection and drastically reduce clearing times and costs.

F. Environment, population and urbanization

50. The cluster on environment, population and urbanization, co-coordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), continued to address challenges relating to environmental degradation, population growth and migration, the rapid growth of cities and the lack of demographic statistics.

51. During the review period, the cluster raised awareness on the importance of enhancing agricultural productivity and food security to combat desertification in Africa. Cluster members also conducted assessment reports on the development of the green economy in several African countries, highlighting such key challenges as financing, capacity-building and technology transfer. According to the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism, African countries integrated pro-environmental sustainability into national development plans. About half of the African countries have reached the target of protecting at least 10 per cent of their territorial and marine areas. A total of 53 African countries have completed national biodiversity strategies and action plans and two thirds are developing or implementing national forest programmes.

52. UNEP supported the African Union on institutional capacity-building through the programme on multilateral environmental agreements in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. In addition, UNEP took the lead in the development of regional flagship programmes, namely, the African Green Economy Partnership, the Partnership for Sustainable Consumption and Production in Africa and the Africa Integrated Environmental Assessment for Sustainable Development. These programmes helped to accelerate the implementation of the Environment Initiative action plan by addressing environmental challenges, poverty alleviation and socioeconomic development simultaneously.

53. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification developed indicators to monitor progress enabling African countries to advance towards land degradation neutrality. In addition, it continued to combat land degradation and enable sustainable land management activities and investment frameworks at the national level based on the national action programmes elaborated by member countries. The World Bank supported the secretariat of the TerrAfrica Initiative with $2 million during the review period and through the development of an African knowledge platform, assessment of the status of countries' strategic investment frameworks and the organization of events at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in December 2014. As a result, TerrAfrica provided more efficient and effective support to 24 countries on sustainable land and water management.

54. The World Bank's support for the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative was reinforced by a six-year regional hub project facilitating South-South cooperation on knowledge and operational services with the aim of restoring the viability of ecosystems and production systems in 11 African countries by 2025.

55. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, through coordination, advocacy and evidence, prepared the ground for a consolidated African position on the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework, critical to linking disaster risk reduction and resilience to the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, sustainable development goals and climate change agreements.

56. In Malawi and the United Republic of Tanzania, the World Meteorological Organization increased the resilience of people most vulnerable to the impacts of climate-related hazards with a focus on agriculture and food security, health and disaster risk reduction. As a result, a steering committee for climate services was established in the United Republic of Tanzania, the seasonal forecast was downscaled to the district level for the programme target districts and agricultural extension workers and journalists were trained to understand and disseminate the seasonal forecast.

57. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) promoted the competitiveness and sustainability of tourism in Africa through the promotion of tourism as a tool for development, enhancing connectivity, managing risks and supporting the development of the African Union-NEPAD Tourism Action Plan. At the 56th meeting of the UNWTO Regional Commission for Africa, held in Angola, African tourism ministers addressed some of the critical issues related to bridging air transport and tourism policies as well as the development of a tourism policy and strategy within the framework of Agenda 2063.

58. UN-Habitat provided national and local governments with tools for measuring and increasing resilience to multi-hazard impacts, including those associated with climate change. UN-Habitat and ECA supported Portuguese-speaking African countries through its urban risk reduction and resilience-building programme aimed at increasing municipal capacity. In this context, UN-Habitat and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supported the building of risk-resilient, safe and child-friendly schools in hazard-prone areas in Mozambique in late 2014.

59. In May 2014, within the framework of the Economic and Social Council integration segment on sustainable urbanization, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and partners organized a panel discussion on sustainable urbanization in Africa. As a result, key policy recommendations were made for the post-2015 development agenda and the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), scheduled for 2016.

G. Social and human development

60. The cluster on social and human development, co-coordinated by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), provided support through the six subclusters, namely, health, HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases; education and human resources; gender and development; social welfare and human trafficking; labour and employment; and sport and culture.

61. Since the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in West Africa, the United Nations system, in close collaboration with international, regional, subregional and national partners, provided comprehensive support, including through the establishment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response, to stop the outbreak, treat the infected and launch recovery. UNOWA, in close collaboration with and support to ECOWAS, increased its engagement with the Mano River Union countries to facilitate the United Nations response to the Ebola virus disease outbreak.

62. The World Bank mobilized nearly $1 billion for the countries hit by the epidemic. To help to contain the Ebola virus disease and provide a coordinated international response for the travel and tourism sector, the World Health Organization (WHO), ICAO, UNWTO, the International Air Transport Association and the World Travel and Tourism Council activated a travel and transport task force to closely monitor the situation and provide timely information to the travel and tourism sector. IAEA provided specialized diagnostic equipment to help Sierra Leone and Liberia to combat the outbreak. Through partnership with the West African Health Organization, UNICEF supported the three affected countries to control the Ebola outbreak and assisted the non-affected countries to develop and implement preparedness measures.

63. The Secretary-General launched the Ebola recovery assessment process through UNDP to prepare the global response for the Ebola recovery in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, in consultation with ECA, the World Bank, the Peacebuilding Support Office, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNESCO and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and in close collaboration with the African Union, ECOWAS and the Mano River Union. As a result, a series of consultations were held and key priorities for intervention and support for the recovery were identified. The assessment paved the way for the implementation of a comprehensive international response led and owned by the three countries. The World Bank created the multi-donor Ebola Recovery and Reconstruction Trust Fund.

64. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) provided technical and financial support for renewed commitment to accelerate the reduction of maternal mortality. This includes the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa, which is the key advocacy initiative in promoting investments in women's health. As a result, 44 African countries have launched the campaign. UNFPA and other partners also supported the African Union Commission in the launch of the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage, which is a two-year campaign to accelerate the process by enhancing continental awareness of the effects of this practice.

65. UNAIDS continued to support the implementation of the 2012 African Union road map on shared responsibility and global solidarity for the AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria response. As a result, in Eastern and Southern Africa, 16 countries developed their own national road maps and more than 70 per cent of the AIDS budget in Botswana, Mauritania, Mauritius, Namibia and South Africa is now covered by domestic resources.

66. UNICEF supported the preparation of recommendations on children and social protection systems in Africa, which were endorsed at the twenty-fourth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, in January 2015. The recommendations included the need to embed social protection in national development plans and expenditure frameworks and to define a social protection floor and a minimum package of services and benefits prioritizing the rights of children in poverty. In child survival and development, UNICEF provided technical support to strengthening the decentralized health-care systems in Djibouti, Egypt and the Sudan. As a result, in October 2014, Egypt rolled out an evidence-based approach focused on real-time monitoring of the removal of barriers and bottlenecks to accessing perinatal health-care services.

67. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs continued to support African countries in a wide range of social development priorities outlined in the Social Policy Framework for Africa, the African Common Position on Social Integration, the African Common Position on Good Practices in Family Policy Development and Implementation and the Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2010-2019). The Department also continued strengthening the institutional capacities of the African public sector. As a result, over 1,600 human resource managers from 46 African countries benefited from the capacity-building workshops held in Benin, Botswana, Ethiopia, Malawi and the United Republic of Tanzania.

68. UNESCO implemented projects in many African countries, including Cameroon, Namibia, Nigeria, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, that focused on strengthening the development of sector-wide policies and planning to improve their teacher policy, with a particular attention to equity, inclusion, gender, teacher training and the harmonization of their ongoing development programmes.

69. UNIDO has been implementing a $1.4 million project in Liberia to help to tackle youth unemployment and the lack of quality vocational education and well-trained technical personnel by upgrading Liberia's training infrastructure. The project included a fully operational training school in Kakata, Margibi County and training for 148 diesel technicians and 84 machine operators as at July 2014.

70. WTO continued to build the capacities of African trade officials through a number of national and regional activities. Almost 1,000 candidates were trained through approximately 50 activities. National and regional activities, including regional and advanced trade policy courses, benefited more than 300 African government officials.

71. IAEA awarded 326 fellowships and 127 scientific visits, delivering more than 1,143 months of training in Africa in the areas of health, food and agriculture, water resource management and sustainable energy development from May 2014 to January 2015. It also conducted 73 training courses in these areas, with a total of 1,197 participants.

H. Science and technology

72. The science and technology cluster, co-coordinated by UNESCO, supported the implementation of Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action, which is built on three pillars, namely, capacity-building, knowledge production and technological innovation.

73. UNESCO supported seven African countries in designing science technology and innovation policy instruments, providing advisory services on science technology and innovation policy and formulating science technology and innovation laws. UNESCO also supported research institute networks to enhance short- and long-term education in emerging areas of nanotechnology, climate change science and engineering. Furthermore, UNESCO partnered with Panasonic and Japan to train experts and policymakers from several African countries to implement a solar electrification system in 75 rural schools and build capacity in renewable energy policy and technologies.

74. The World Bank supported NEPAD in addressing the data gap, rebalancing post-secondary education towards the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics and closing the gender gap in those areas.

75. ITU, through the Connect a School, Connect a Community initiative, supported the NEPAD E-Schools Initiative. Sponsored by France and Switzerland, ITU provided information and communications technology equipment, delivered information and communications technology courses for children and trained more than 213 teachers at 71 sites in the Gambia, Lesotho, the Niger, Sierra Leone and the United Republic of Tanzania. The projects improved information and communications technology access for schoolchildren and local community members, teachers' information and communications technology skills and school administration through information and communications technology.

I. Communication, advocacy and outreach

76. The advocacy and communications cluster, co-chaired by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, continued to promote public information on and undertake advocacy for NEPAD priorities and the popularization of Agenda 2063.

77. In October 2014, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, together with the Department of Public Information, ECA, the African Union Commission and the NEPAD Agency, organized Africa Week 2014 at United Nations Headquarters in New York to raise awareness and mobilize support at the global level for the implementation of Africa's peace, governance and development priorities, including Agenda 2063, NEPAD and the African Peer Review Mechanism. The week featured a series of high-level events, which identified how the international community can support the implementation of and accountability for Agenda 2063 and called for coherence between Agenda 2063 and the post-2015 development agenda. Development partners were urged to meet their ODA commitments, intensify efforts to address illicit financial flows and increase investment to cover NEPAD infrastructure projects. The week culminated with a renewed commitment to the implementation of NEPAD and the African Peer Review Mechanism at the general debate on the development of Africa.

78. Six knowledge products on African development were also launched during the week. In addition, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, ECA and the Department of Public Information organized a panel discussion to launch the African Union-ECA *Economic Report on Africa 2014* and raise awareness on African emerging development issues. These products along with the UNCTAD report *Economic Development in Africa Report 2014: Catalysing Investment for Transformative Growth in Africa* served to strengthen the capacity of Member States to formulate evidence-based policy.

79. In October 2014, the Secretary-General and President of the World Bank visited the Horn of Africa, accompanied by the President of the Islamic Development Bank and senior representatives of AfDB, the African Union and the European Union. During the visit, the delegation stressed the importance of development in promoting peace, security and stability, launched the Horn of Africa Initiative and pledged to mobilize more than $8 billion over the coming years to promote stability and development in the Horn.

80. During the review period, the Department of Public Information highlighted the priorities, achievements and challenges facing NEPAD through 118 feature articles in *Africa Renewal* magazine published in English and French and republished more than 1,780 times in 489 different media outlets in 52 countries worldwide. The Department also strengthened its outreach activities on Africa using original content for its social media platforms on themes such as trade, infrastructure development and combating the Ebola virus.

81. The United Nations Governance Centre hosted a series of high-level platforms in Egypt, Ethiopia and Ghana on corporate sustainability and the role of the private sector in advancing the broader United Nations development goals. The Centre launched the Africa Sustainability Initiative in June 2014 to mobilize private sector participation in key areas of development in support of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, including youth unemployment, infrastructure development and inclusive investment. In September 2014, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa partnered with Africa Investor and the Global Partnerships Forum to raise awareness on investment opportunities in Africa among international investors through the African Heads of State and Government investment dialogue.

82. In support of the African Union's Year of Agriculture and Food Security, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa partnered with the African Union, the NEPAD Agency and FAO to organize a high-level panel discussion on the topic "Transforming Africa's Agriculture for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods: Strengthening the African Union/United Nations Partnership for Tangible Impact", held in May 2014. The event enhanced understanding about the role of Member States and development partners in advancing Africa's agriculture transformation towards mobilizing support for the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme.

III. Policy issues in the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development

A. Strengthening of the cluster system and enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union

83. During the reporting period, the United Nations system took several steps to strengthen the nine clusters and their subclusters, refocus the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union and enhance United Nations support to the African Union and its organs. In order to allow United Nations leadership to directly engage with Africa's senior national authorities, the annual meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism was aligned with the joint annual meetings of the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance for the first time.

84. In order to adapt to the changing global landscape and to African priorities, steps were taken towards reconfiguring Regional Coordination Mechanism clusters, taking into account the budgetary and capacity requirements, and aligning them with the African Union Commission Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and the NEPAD Strategic Plan 2014-2017 in the short term, the 10-Year Implementation Plan for Agenda 2063 in the medium term and Agenda 2063 in the long term.

85. Steps were also taken towards establishing a programme known as the Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda as the successor to the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union.

B. Support to the mobilization of financial resources for the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development

86. The United Nations system continued to support the implementation of the African Union-NEPAD domestic resource mobilization strategy. The High-Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa, supported by ECA, was endorsed at the twenty-fourth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, held in January 2015. The report of the Panel estimates that more than $50 billion leaves Africa annually in illicit flows and recommends ways of curbing the outflow. Many African countries have improved the efficiency and effectiveness of their revenue mobilization efforts by broadening their tax base and by establishing autonomous revenue authorities and enhancing governance in the management of resources. In 2013, domestic revenue collection exceeded $570 billion (see A/69/163).

87. UNDP supported the African Union and the NEPAD Agency in the preparation of African countries for, and their participation in, the High-Level Meeting on Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation: Building Towards an Inclusive Post-2015 Development Agenda, held in Mexico in April 2014. UNDP contributed to consolidate Africa's priorities into a common position within the Africa Action Plan on Development Effectiveness. As a result, African member States succeeded in having African priorities reflected in the outcome document of the meeting and in securing the global community's commitment to support disaster risk management agenda beyond the tax matter.

88. In May 2014, the Office of the Special Adviser for Africa, along with Japan, the African Union Commission, UNDP and the World Bank, co-organized the first ministerial meeting of the fifth Tokyo International Conference on Africa's Development, at which the implementation matrix of the Yokohama Action Plan 2013-2017 was adopted. To support the implementation of the matrix, Japan has disbursed $3.5 billion in ODA, representing 25 per cent of the $14 billion in ODA committed at the Conference, as a part of the overall $32 billion that was pledged.

C. Cross-cutting issues

89. During the review period, the United Nations system continued to support the capacity development of African institutions, women and youth empowerment.

90. UNESCO supported efforts to promote women's participation in science and engineering through the award of fellowships to distinguished women scientists and engineers to pursue high-level research. The Peacebuilding Support Office launched its second Gender Promotion Initiative to deepen support for women's empowerment and gender equality, which resulted in the selection of nine projects in Guinea, Mali and Somalia. These projects received a total of $3 million in additional country support.

91. UN-Women is supporting the NEPAD Agency's gender and climate support programme aimed at facilitating access to climate adaptation knowledge by women

farmers. UN-Women supported the development of the NEPAD gender mainstreaming framework in agriculture, which was piloted through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and is to be presented for adoption by all member States of the African Union in 2016. Moreover, following the participation of UN-Women in the NEPAD Conference for Women in Agriculture: Investing in African Women: Opening the Space for Agribusiness, held in South Africa in October 2014, a fund for the capacity development of rural women was established by NEPAD to support smallholder farmers in agribusiness activities.

92. UNODC, together with the SADC secretariat, worked to implement programme initiatives on trafficking in persons, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS treatment, prevention and care in prisons. A situational assessment on gender-based violence in Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe was endorsed by the SADC Gender Unit and led to the prioritization of activities to combat gender-based violence reflected in the national action plans of participating countries.

93. The Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the African Union Commission, the Department of Public Information and UNDP co-organized two high-level events, which were held at the margins of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2015. One was on the proposed continental results framework on women, peace and security and the second was on the emerging leadership of Africa's young women and girls towards 2063. These complementary events focused on the priorities of African women and girls in the areas of peace, security, leadership and development and highlighted efforts and good practices as well as challenges in the implementation of these agendas in Africa.

94. The Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNDP, organized the 2014 and 2015 Economic and Social Council Youth Forums. The theme of the 2014 forum, held in June, was "Realizing the future they want" and the theme of the 2015 forum, held in February, was "Time for global action". These events provided a platform to advocate for and ensure that African youth development issues are considered in the post-2015 development agenda process.

95. As part of its pilot cross-border peacebuilding support programmes, the Peacebuilding Support Office funded activities in the Niger border region with Mali through the project "Youth, peace and development". More than 1,500 young people, including 305 women, have benefited from income generation opportunities towards the consolidation of peace.

D. Institutional support

96. ECA continued to support Africa's preparation of Agenda 2063 and collaborated with the NEPAD Agency in holding two high-level dialogues to sensitize Africa's planners on issues pertaining to the Agenda.

97. To strengthen the capacity of the NEPAD Agency in key priority areas and enhance the NEPAD process, ECA continued the secondment of two senior advisers to the secretariat of the African Peer Review Mechanism and the NEPAD Agency to provide direct technical support and advisory services. ECA and UNDP also continued their direct support to the secretariat of the African Peer Review Mechanism.

98. UNDP has supported the NEPAD Agency in facilitating regular interactions between the African members of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and with the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing. UNDP and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa have also been providing support to the African Group in the negotiation process by providing logistic, technical and communication support.

99. FAO provided a Senior Policy Adviser to assist the African Union Commission in the preparation of the Post-Malabo Implementation Strategy and Road Map and, in particular, the commitment to end hunger in Africa by 2025, in line with the recent agreement by the two institutions to focus their collaboration in four key areas: supporting the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme process in the framework of the Malabo Implementation Strategy and Road Map; establishing a centre for best practice; South-South cooperation and capacity development; and organizing think tank events for strategic implementation.

100. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs contributed to building foundations for NEPAD by facilitating a continued dialogue between United Nations agencies and other stakeholders in order to strengthen partnerships for humanitarian action in the framework of the Ten-Year Capacity-building Programme for the African Union. The collaboration between the Office and the African Union brokered a multi-stakeholder dialogue that, through the regional consultations leading to the World Humanitarian Summit, elucidates and buttresses the strategic linkages among peace, security and development and strengthens the case for effective humanitarian action in Africa in order to achieve the NEPAD goals.

101. UNODC assisted the African Union in the implementation of its Plan of Action on Drug Control (2013-2018). UNODC has also expanded its cooperation with the NEPAD Agency the regional economic communities and their member States through the development and endorsement of multi-year regional programmes on drugs and crime under the auspices of ECOWAS, the League of Arab States and SADC.

E. Challenges and constraints

102. Resource constraints remained a major challenge as far as the full implementation of clusters' business plans and capacity-building support was concerned. There is still no specific budget allocation for the activities of the clusters, while inter-cluster collaboration remains a work in progress. The mechanism to share experiences between clusters is not yet fully operational, resulting in delayed inter-cluster collaboration and communication on cross-cutting issues. The main obstacle remains the appointment of a focal point or dedicated staff to facilitate inter-cluster communication.

103. In addition, the joint secretariat of the Regional Coordination Mechanism required further strengthening for effective cluster coordination, including monitoring the implementation of the Ten-Year Capacity-building Programme for the African Union. Furthermore, many clusters were faced with the challenge of elaborating joint programmes for maximum impact, despite constraints in programming cycles, the lack of a common funding pool and differences in the mandates of the individual governing bodies.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

104. The United Nations system continues to provide substantial support to the priority areas of NEPAD, at both the global and regional levels, through the nine clusters of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and through the funding of programmes and projects, capacity- and institution-building activities, policy advisory services, resource mobilization, advocacy and humanitarian assistance.

105. The United Nations system enhanced coordination and coherence in support of NEPAD priorities in such areas as agriculture and food security, infrastructure development and peace and stability and in socioeconomic sectors such as the empowerment of women and health. In particular, the role of the United Nations system in response to the Ebola virus disease outbreak was exemplary.

106. There are persisting resource and adaptation challenges in the face of the new global and regional development priorities and notably in view of the ongoing processes of the sustainable development goals, the post-2015 development agenda, the third International Conference on Financing for Development and the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris. The African Union's transformative Agenda 2063, adopted in January 2015, calls for more coherence and coordination of the United Nations system support for Africa's development, including for NEPAD. Also, the United Nations system should provide support towards the implementation and monitoring of Agenda 2063 and its 10-year action plans through harmonization with subregional and regional architectures in Africa, including the regional economic communities and the NEPAD Agency, at the strategic and operational levels.

107. In view of the increasing role entrusting the regional economic communities to shape, adopt and implement the Agenda 2063 10-year action plans, and the appointment by the African Union of a special representative to the regional economic communities, the United Nations should attach greater importance to enhancing the capacity and ability of the communities in this regard.

108. Since 2015 coincides with the African Union's Year for Women's Empowerment and Development towards Agenda 2063, the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and the midpoint of the African Women's Decade, the United Nations system should further strengthen its coordination and enhance its support towards accelerating the implementation of all commitments relating to gender equality and women's empowerment made in these frameworks.

109. In line with the African Women's Decade, the United Nations system should further support the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda in Africa and of Agenda 2063 and its first 10-year action plan.

110. The United Nations system should also promote the integration of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda and enhance its global advocacy efforts for African women and girls.

111. In line with the global response to the Ebola outbreak, the United Nations system should further enhance coordination and efforts to implement the comprehensive strategy for "getting down to and staying at zero" cases of Ebola by developing containment plans and adopting early warning and disease surveillance systems to prevent any recurrence and spread of the virus.

112. In view of the severe socioeconomic impacts of Ebola in West Africa, the United Nations system should also enhance its support for the global recovery response for Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to ensure a rapid and safe resumption of basic services, while also addressing structural health and non-health weaknesses, including agriculture, food and nutrition security, education, peacebuilding and State-building. The United Nations system should further support African health-care systems, as the Ebola outbreak has revealed their weaknesses.

113. The United Nations system should further enhance its support towards the implementation of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, with particular attention to the Dakar Agenda for Action and the 16 priority projects. In line with the high-level thematic debate on the promotion of investment in Africa and its catalytic role in achieving Africa's development objectives, the United Nations system should support the mobilization of resources by fostering public-private partnerships, infrastructure project preparation and the establishment of an enabling investment environment.

114. The United Nations system should enhance its support towards Africa's structural transformation, as envisaged in Agenda 2063, with particular attention to inclusive and sustainable industrial development. It is also critical to support the development of productive capacity, including energy for industrialization, while building the capacity to foster value addition and natural resource management.

115. In line with the peace, security and development support, the United Nations system should strengthen its support to the African Peer Review Mechanism to foster good political, economic and corporate governance in Africa.

116. The United Nations system should also continue to engage all Member States as the international community works towards adopting a new, meaningful agreement on climate change in Paris in December 2015.